2004/2005 : Report 1

OFFICE OF THE

Auditor General of British Columbia

Follow-up of Performance Reports

April 2004

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The Honourable Claude Richmond
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
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Dear Sir:

I have the honour to transmit herewith to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia my 2004/2005 Report 1: Follow-up of Performance Reports.

Wayne Strelioff, FCA
Auditor General

Victoria, British Columbia
April 2004

copy: Mr. E. George MacMinn, Q.C.
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Follow-up of Performance Reports

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Follow-up of Performance Reports

Auditor General's Comments

I am pleased to present in this report the results of my Office's follow-up work on two performance reports issued in 2001.

We perform follow-up reviews to provide the Legislative Assembly and the public with an update on the progress made by management in implementing our recommendations and those made by the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Our recommendations are designed to improve public sector performance, and are an important value-added component of our work.

We follow a process in our review that was agreed to with the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts. As we complete a follow-up review, we provide a report to the Committee. Periodically, all of the reports provided to the Committee are assembled into a report for the Legislative Assembly.

Our approach to completing our follow-up reviews is to ask management of the organizations with responsibility for the matters examined to provide us with written representations describing action taken with respect to the recommendations. We then review these representations to determine if the information reported, including an assessment of the progress made in implementing the recommendations, was presented fairly in all significant respects (Appendix B). For the two reports we reviewed, we concluded that it was.

In this report, we provide a summary of both the orginal reports, our overall conclusions, a summary of the overall status of recommendations and both organization's response to our request for an accounting of progress.

I am pleased that management has accepted our recommendations and has taken action to implement most of them. I encourage the government organizations concerned to complete the implementation of all of these recommendations as I believe it is important that they be implemented on a timely basis.

I wish to express my appreciation to the staff and senior management of the organizations we reviewed for their cooperation in preparing the follow-up reports, providing the appropriate documentation and assisting my staff throughout the review process.

Wayne Strelioff

Wayne Strelioff, FCA
Auditor General

Victoria, British Columbia
April 2004

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Information provided to the Select Standing Committee
on Public Accounts regarding
the second follow-up of recommendations in

2001/2002 Report 1:

Managing Interface Fire Risks

November 2003

OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

To the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts

We have carried out a second follow-up review of the implementation of the recommendations in our *2001/2002 Report 1: Managing Interface Fire Risks* and enclose the following:

- My opinion on the status provided by management.
- A Summary of the original report showing the audit purpose, scope and overall conclusion.
- A Summary of the status of recommendations.
- A list of recommendations that have not yet been fully or substantially implemented.
- Response from the Provincial Emergency Program—Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Office of the Fire Commissioner—Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and the Protection Branch—Ministry of Forests on the status of recommendations.
- Timetable of Reports Issued and Public Accounts Committee Meetings on Managing Interface Fire Risks.

Since there are still 8 significant recommendations that have only been partially implemented, we plan to carry out a further follow-up after the Committee has addressed this report.

Wayne Strelioff

Wayne Strelioff, FCA
Auditor General

November 10, 2003

OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

To the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts

This is our report on our October 2003 follow-up of the recommendations contained in our *2001/2002 Report 1: Managing Interface Fire Risks*.

Information as to the status of outstanding recommendations was provided to us by the Provincial Emergency Program who coordinated the responses made by the Ministry of Forests, The Office of the Fire Commissioner and PEP as of October 2003.

We have reviewed the representations provided by the Provincial Emergency Program in October and November 2003 regarding progress in implementing the recommendations. The review was made in accordance with standards for assurance engagements established by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, and accordingly consisted primarily of enquiry, document review and discussion.

Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention to cause us to believe that the progress report prepared jointly by the Ministry of Forests, the Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Provincial Emergency Program does not present fairly, in all significant respects, the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in our June 2001 report.

Wayne Strelioff

Wayne Strelioff, FCA
Auditor General

November 10, 2003

Summary of Original Report on Managing Interface Fire Risks

Audit Purpose and Scope

The purpose of our audit was to assess the degree to which governments in British Columbia are prepared for major interface fires.

The audit focused on the following provincial government entities with responsibilities for managing interface fire risks (either directly or in support of local governments):

- Protection Branch in the Ministry of Forests;
- Office of the Fire Commissioner in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs; and
- Provincial Emergency Program in the Ministry of Attorney General.

The audit also included local governments (cities, districts, regional districts, municipalities, towns and villages) in order to assess the extent to which local and provincial government activities have been effective at managing interface fire risks.

We assessed the degree to which governments are prepared by looking for answers to the following questions:

- Have the responsibilities relating to the management of interface fire risks been clearly assigned through legislation or otherwise?
- Have adequate steps been taken to prevent interface fires and mitigate their effects if they occur?
- Have adequate steps been taken to prepare to respond to and recover from interface fires if they occur?
- Is adequate information being gathered about interface fire risks in order to assess the magnitude of the issue in the province, raise awareness, plan the appropriate provincial actions, and report on the levels of preparedness of provincial communities?

Our audit was carried out between December 1999 and July 2000. Our examination was performed in accordance with assurance standards established by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, and accordingly included such tests and other procedures we considered necessary in the circumstances. We obtained evidence from three main sources: interviews, surveys and document reviews.

Our provincial government interviews focused on staff of the Ministry of Forests, Office of the Fire Commissioner, and the Provincial Emergency Program in both head office and field locations throughout the province. As well, we interviewed local authority staff such as chief administrative officers, fire chiefs, development/planning directors, and emergency coordinators in areas of the province with significant interface fire risks.

We designed and conducted four surveys targeting local authorities including chief administrative officers, fire chiefs, development/planning directors, and emergency coordinators (Appendix A). The purpose of the surveys was to obtain the recipients' assessments of the interface fire risks their communities face and the adequacy of interface fire risk management in their immediate locations.

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During the course of the audit, we also collected and analyzed more than 200 documents containing research results and information about factors related to the management of interface fire risks.

We did not review the adequacy or appropriateness of the methods and approaches used to fight interface fires. (For details about the Office's performance auditing objectives and methodology, see Appendix B. A list of reports issued to date in 2000/2001 by the Office is provided in Appendix C.)

Overall Conclusion

We concluded that governments in British Columbia need to do more to be better prepared for major interface fires. A significant problem is that there is a lack of complete and reliable information about the issue—number of fires, locations, and the costs and losses associated with these events. In our opinion, the lack of information hampers efforts by provincial agencies whose role it is to raise the level of awareness of the issue among provincial and local governments. This, in turn, leads to limited attention being given to the issue by both levels of government.

Another important problem is the lack of clarity in the allocation of roles and responsibilities among provincial agencies for managing interface fire risks. Provincial emergency legislation and policies indicate that local governments are responsible for managing risks within their boundaries, while the provincial government is expected to provide material support, advice, expertise or other assistance as requested. The provincial government is also responsible for managing the risks in unorganized areas. These arrangements work reasonably well when it comes to responding to an interface fire, but response is only one element of sound risk management. The remaining elements—prevention, preparedness and recovery—must also be addressed. At present, there is a lack of clarity about which government agency (or agencies) should do the work. The presence of federal and First Nations lands also add to the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities. Overall, the number of agencies and levels of government involved makes managing interface fire risks a relatively complex task.

Interface fire prevention requires raising awareness among local governments and their residents about the risks of these fires and encouraging them to take actions to mitigate the risks. Provincial agencies, particularly Protection Branch in the Ministry of Forests, work hard each year to help raise awareness in communities at risk. However, fire and emergency experts say the levels of awareness continue to need improvement. Protection Branch and the Office of the Fire Commissioner in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs have also produced and made available to communities information that can be used to identify and mitigate interface fire risks. But again, fire and emergency experts believe that interface fire prevention work has been insufficient in many communities with high or moderate risks, and that even when measures are put in place to help control the risks, compliance is a problem.

Preparing to respond to interface fires involves taking action ahead of time to ensure that fire and emergency experts, other emergency response agencies and residents will be ready to react effectively when a fire emergency occurs. Many aspects of response planning are done well in the

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Continued . . .

province, and this has helped limit the number of interface fires involving major costs and property damage. For example, the province has highly trained and well-equipped wildland firefighters strategically located around the province and supported by sophisticated systems for their deployment. Many communities also have highly trained and well-equipped structural firefighters. Agreements are in place to coordinate efforts of the two groups so that effective fire response is assured and resources are added when required. Many communities also have highly-trained emergency responders. Despite all these strengths, there are still areas for improvement. A priority is the need to improve the state of local emergency planning. Not only do many jurisdictions lack emergency plans, but even those that exist often do not deal adequately with interface fires and most do not address recovery planning. Some jurisdictions periodically exercise their fire and emergency response personnel and systems to test their ability to respond to a significant interface fire, but more testing is required and more agencies need to be involved.

Local firefighters and emergency responders both see a need to improve their training and equipment to deal with interface fire situations, and both groups believe their communities are inadequately prepared to deal with major evacuations. Continued efforts are needed to find ways to reduce risks in small communities that have no structural fire services or only small volunteer groups.

Summary of Status of Recommendations

Managing Interface Fire Risks

Original Issue Date: June 2001

Years Followed Up: July 2002, October 2003

Summary of status at October 2003	OAG	Further Follow-up Required
Total Recommendations	**38**	**8**
Fully Implemented	23	0
Substantially Implemented	4	0
Partially Implemented	8	8
Alternative Action	2	0
No Action	1	0

Recommendations that have only been partially implemented

Part II: Assigning Responsibilities

3. The Ministry of Forests should formalize in legislation its response priorities relating to the protection of human life, property and natural resources.

Part IV: Assessing the Risks

8. The Ministry of Forests should complete hazard mapping of unorganized areas of the province over a reasonable time period, with emphasis on high and moderate risk areas.

Part V: Mitigating the Risks

10. The Interface Fire Committee should encourage high and moderate risk communities to take practical steps to mitigate interface fire risks.

Part VI: Establishing Working Relationships Among Response Agencies

12. The Office of the Fire Commissioner should work with communities to identify practical ways to improve public safety in populated areas of the province that lack fire department services.

Part VIII: Planning Community Emergency Response

14. The Provincial Emergency Program should develop a detailed implementation plan to provide support at the community level where assessments reveal emergency preparedness deficiencies.

Part IX: Training Firefighters and other Emergency Responders

15. The Interface Fire Committee should work with communities, with emphasis in high and moderate risk locations, to improve training of local firefighters.

Part XIII: Recovering From Major Interface Fires

21. The Provincial Emergency Program should develop guidelines and examples of recovery planning and make this material available to provincial communities.

Part XIV: Gathering and Reporting Information

22. The Interface Fire Committee should gather complete and reliable information about the nature and extent of the interface fire issue in the province and use the information to report on the management of the risks in communities with high or moderate risk associated with this hazard.

Response from The Provincial Emergency Program —Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Office of the Fire Commissioner—Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and The Protection Branch—Ministry of Forests

Introductory Statement:

In the summer of 2003, the record-setting drought conditions, combined with winds and high temperatures, created some of the most volatile fire behaviour British Columbia has ever seen. The high number of wild-land fires is a direct result of a significant drought—the most severe drought in the last 100 years in some southern parts of the province.

The devastating wild-land fires constitute one of the largest and most expensive natural disasters in the history of British Columbia. In the face of this natural disaster, cooperation among federal, provincial and local governments, non-governmental groups, the Canadian Armed Forces, the public, the private sector and volunteers from across the country has been unprecedented and exemplary, particularly in fighting the ravaging fires. The generosity, solidarity and support shown by all those directly and indirectly affected by the disaster are a great credit to the people of British Columbia and Canada.

This unprecedented disaster has clearly demonstrated that BC has a robust Emergency Management Structure capable of responding to all-hazard emergencies, and that the fire fighting capabilities of the Forest Protection Program are second to none.

The Premier of BC announced a Firestorm 2003 provincial review on October 4, 2003, to be completed by February 15, 2004. In addition, program and tactical level reviews and debriefings are currently underway, as well as a detailed review of specific service delivery aspects such as Emergency Social Services. New short and long term Work Action: plans will then be developed, before the 2004 fire season, which take into account both the lessons learned and their application in respect to the "Managing Interface Fire Risks" recommendations.

The three ministries have worked in partnership to implement the recommendations of the report and have made significant progress. For example:

- The province has developed an emergency management structure that encompasses an all-hazard integrated response model. The integrated response model proved to be very effective in the management of the provincial response to "Firestorm 2003."

- Provincial and local interface fire committees have adopted an integrated cross-ministry, cross-government approach to the implementation of the recommendations.
- 400 newly elected officials attended nineteen workshops across BC in Spring 2003. The workshops focused on key components of emergency management, including the wild-land interface forest fires hazard.
- Throughout May and June of 2003, PEP promoted hazard awareness by holding provincial preparedness meetings in high-risk fire areas. A web-based conference call process was developed that allowed for a joint web-based presentation/conference call to areas of the province where travel distances could to preclude preparedness meeting participation. About 350 people participated. Participants included local government senior officials, first responders such as police and fire, emergency program coordinators, the medical community, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), other ministries, etc. The potential summer fire hazard was the key component.
- Preparedness advisories, widely distributed throughout the year, included the province's readiness level for the possibility of wild-land/urban interface fires.
- An interface fire exercise was used as part of the May/June/July Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (TEAMS) training sessions held in each of the PEP regions.
- The BC Emergency Social Services (ESS) demonstrated in 2003 that BC had the capability of managing a mass evacuation. ESS provided food, shelter, and where needed, clothing to 37,500 of the province's more than 50,0000 evacuees, at an estimated cost of $20 million.
- BC demonstrated that, under the authority of a provincial emergency declaration, the Office of the Fire Commissioner could take effective control of all structural fire resources in the province and relocate 167 pieces of equipment and over 400 fire fighters in support of threatened communities. The units were effectively deployed under unified command for the first time in BC history.
- The publicity, both during and following the 2003 fire disaster, has heightened awareness of the interface fire risk for both local governments and the general public. As a result, there is a strong desire to learn from this disaster and apply the lessons learned.

All of these factors have contributed to the positive results presented in this report and the advances in interface fire preparedness for many communities.

Summary of Status of Implementation by Recommendation
2001/02 Report 1: Managing Interface Fire Risks
As at October 2003

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
Part I: General					
1. The provincial government should establish an Interface Fire Committee under the provisions of the Emergency Program Act to develop strategies and action plans to improve the management of interface fire risks in the province. The committee should be adequately funded and consist of representatives from the Provincial Emergency Program, the Ministry of Forests, and the Office of the Fire Commissioner. The Provincial Emergency Program—the provincial government's emergency coordinating agency and leader in emergency management—should chair the committee.		✓			
Part II: Assigning Responsibilities					
2. The Interface Fire Committee should clarify roles and responsibilities related to managing interface fire risks.	✓				
3. The Ministry of Forests should formalize in legislation its response priorities relating to the protection of human life, property and natural resources.			✓		
Part III: Raising Awareness of the Risks					
4. The Interface Fire Committee should work to raise awareness of interface fire risks in the province, with emphasis in high and moderate risk locations.	✓				
5. The Ministry of Forests should continue to have a significant role in developing and delivering programs to raise community awareness about interface fire risks, and should formalize its plans for doing this work.		✓			
6. The Provincial Emergency Program should encourage emergency program coordinators to discuss interface fire risks with local emergency planning committees and to seek the involvement of the committees in raising public awareness about the risks.	✓				

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
Part IV: Assessing the Risks					
7. The Interface Fire Committee should encourage organized areas of the province to assess interface fire risks in their communities.	✓				
8. The Ministry of Forests should complete hazard mapping of unorganized areas of the province over a reasonable time period, with emphasis on high and moderate risk areas.			✓		
9. The Provincial Emergency Program should complete the development of a BC Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment model and encourage its use at the local level to assess interface fire risks.	✓				
Part V: Mitigating the Risks					
10. The Interface Fire Committee should encourage high and moderate risk communities to take practical steps to mitigate interface fire risks.			✓		
Part VI: Establishing Working Relationships Among Response Agencies					
11. The Ministry of Forests should:					
▪ Work with local fire departments to address the concerns they have with the Ministry of Forests Operating Guidelines.	✓				
▪ Work with local fire departments and emergency response staffs in high and moderate interface fire risk areas to improve the application of unified command.	✓				
12. The Office of the Fire Commissioner should:					
▪ Work with local fire departments to identify practical solutions to the current impediments to fire department response outside prescribed boundaries.				✓	
▪ Work with communities to identify practical ways to improve public safety in populated areas of the province that lack fire department services.			✓		

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
Part VII: Accessing Additional Firefighting and Emergency Response Resources					
13. The Office of the Fire Commissioner should identify the impediments to mutual aid agreements in some fire departments in the province and recommend practical solutions.				✓	
Part VIII: Planning Community Emergency Response					
14. The Provincial Emergency Program should:					
■ Encourage all areas of the province with high or moderate interface fire risks to put plans in place to deal with such emergencies, and to develop the ability to enact the plans when needed.	✓				
■ Review community emergency plans periodically, giving specific attention to interface fire planning.	✓				
■ Finalize development of a formal process for assessing the preparedness level of local authorities and assess each community's level of preparedness on a regular basis.		✓			
■ Develop a detailed implementation plan to provide support at the community level where assessments reveal emergency preparedness deficiencies.			✓		
Part IX: Training Firefighters and Other Emergency Responders					
15. The Interface Fire Committee should work with communities, with emphasis in high and moderate risk locations to:					
■ Improve training of local firefighters.			✓		
■ Improve training of other emergency responders.		✓			
16. The Provincial Emergency Program should:					
■ Finalize the training aspects of the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System as quickly as possible and communicate the standard to all local authorities and regional districts.	✓				
■ Devise practical ways to speed the delivery of Emergency Response Management System training to fire departments and local emergency response staffs.	✓				

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
Part X: Equipping Firefighters and Other Emergency Responders					
17. The Interface Fire Committee should identify local fire departments in high and moderate risk locations that lack suitable firefighting and communications equipment, and work with the communities to resolve the deficiencies.					✓
18. The Provincial Emergency Program should encourage local fire and emergency response agencies to test radio communications annually and to acquire access to key frequencies.	✓				
Part XI: Planning to Evacuate Communities					
19. The Provincial Emergency Program should:					
▪ Develop clear guidelines on evacuation planning and make them available to community officials.	✓				
▪ Include an assessment of evacuation planning as part of the proposed overall assessment of the preparedness level of each local authority.	✓				
▪ Offer training courses on evacuation planning.	✓				
▪ Develop a strategy for improving the provincial capability to provide emergency warnings and alerts, including conducting a review of current provincial capabilities in this regard and researching best practices.	✓				
Part XII: Testing the Ability to Respond to Major Interface Fires					
20. The Provincial Emergency Program should:					
▪ Develop a program to guide local fire departments and emergency responders in developing realistic scenarios for interface fire exercises.	✓				
▪ Encourage provincial communities to conduct interface fire exercises.	✓				
▪ Encourage its own representatives, key provincial response agencies and other affected provincial and local agencies to participate, whenever possible, in interface fire exercises conducted by communities.	✓				
▪ Actively support local communities in the design, conduct and evaluation interface fire exercises.	✓				
▪ Maintain a database of lessons learned and best practices.	✓				
▪ Develop an annual exercise schedule and encourage communities to follow it.	✓				

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
Part XIII: Recovering From Major Interface Fires					
21. The Provincial Emergency Program should:					
▪ Develop guidelines and examples of recovery planning and make this material available to provincial communities.			✓		
▪ Include an assessment of recovery planning as part of the proposed overall assessment of the preparedness level of each local authority.	✓				
Part XIV: Gathering and Reporting Information					
22. The Interface Fire Committee should gather complete and reliable information about the nature and extent of the interface fire issue in the province and use the information to report on the management of the risks in communities with high or moderate risk associated with this hazard.			✓		

Part 1: General

1. **The** provincial government **should establish an Interface Fire Committee under the provisions of the Emergency Program Act to develop strategies and action plans to improve the management of interface fire risks in the province. The Committee should be adequately funded and consist of representatives from the Provincial Emergency Program, the Ministry of Forests, and the Office of the Fire Commissioner. The Provincial Emergency Program—the provincial government's emergency coordinating agency and leader in emergency management—should chair the Committee.**

Status: Substantially implemented

Interface Fire Committee

An Interface Fire Committee has been formed under the provisions of the Emergency Program Act. The Committee, chaired by the Provincial Emergency Program, is currently comprised of six members, including two each from Ministry of Forests, Office of the Fire Commissioner and Provincial Emergency Program.

The Interface Fire Committee members continue to meet formally and maintain communications on a regular basis. The Committee, for example, met on March 13th, 2003. Items discussed included Fire Smart development and pending dissemination, elected officials' workshops, regional interface fire committee activities and requirements, interface fire threat for 2003, and provincial and regional readiness activities to date, a disaster resilient communities initiative update, and enhanced preventive work occurring in the regions.

Funding:

The Interface Fire Committee as an entity has some ability to act independently. The reality is that the Committee has no dedicated funding and is primarily engaged in the sharing of subject matter expertise and coordinating the individual activities of MOF, OFC and PEP as they relate to emergency preparedness in general and interface fire specifically.

There is an expectation within the "Managing Interface Fire Risks" report that the Committee will be able to operate as a separate entity in the implementation of some of the recommendations. This has not been possible, as the Committee as an entity has no separate budget or staff resources.

Program Directors have provided funding from their respective program budgets, as required to ensure that Committee members have been able to attend central and regional meetings. Funding also ensures that key documentation such as Fire Smart can be produced and distributed.

Part II: Assigning Responsibilities

2. The Interface Fire Committee should clarify roles and responsibilities related to managing interface fire risks.

Status: Fully implemented.

(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002):

The *Emergency Program Management Regulation* places responsibility within the provincial government for wild-land (forest) fires with the Ministry of Forest (MOF) and for structural fires with the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services/Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC). Whereas MOF is actively engaged in the suppression of fires, the OFC's role is primarily one of advice and assistance. While not specifically legislated, responsibility for the actual suppression of structural fires rests with the property owner or by arrangement with established fire departments. However, local authorities (municipalities) are required by the Emergency Program Act to have emergency plans, and the provision of fire services at the municipal level is discretionary.

Education on the prevention of fire and wild-land urban interface fire, and measures taken to prevent wild-land interface forest fires, is the role of OFC, MOF and local governments. PEP supports local governments with respect to general all-hazard public awareness and education.

To provide guidance in the management of the interface fire risk, PEP, in conjunction with MOF and OFC, has facilitated the publication of a provincial "Wild-land-Urban Interface Fire Consequence Management Plan." The plan delineates the responsibility of both provincial agencies and local authorities in a manner that clearly addresses responsibility and expectation.

3. **The** Ministry of Forests **should formalize in legislation its response priorities relating to the protection of human life, property and natural resources.**

Status: Partially implemented

A new Wildfire Act, originally scheduled for presentation to the house at the spring 2003 session, but delayed due to heavy legislative workload, has been rescheduled for introduction at the fall 2003 legislative session.

Work Action:

Implementation is planned for early 2004.

Part III: Raising Awareness of the Risks

4. **The** Interface Fire Committee **should work to raise awareness of interface fire risks in the province, with emphasis in high and moderate risk locations.**

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services issues.

Status: Fully implemented

Interface Fire Committee

The committee, as a component of the provincial integrated response model, continues to demonstrate provincial level leadership in supporting regionally and locally based working groups, many of which have been in operation for years. The regional committees, including the Kootenay Interface Steering Team (KIST), the Thompson Okanagan Interface Committee (TOIC), and the Coastal Interagency Interface Committee, are dedicated to promoting public education/ awareness, co-ordination of inter-agency cooperation, and the conducting of multi-agency exercises.

Elected Officials' Workshops

Committee members worked as part of the team that developed and implemented the 19 Elected Officials workshops prior to fire season. These workshops focused on key components of emergency management, including many aspects of planning, preparedness, response and recovery from wild-land interface forest fires. Overall, in excess of 400 elected officials—many newly elected—attended throughout BC.

Provincial Preparedness Workshops

Throughout May and June of 2003, PEP promoted hazard awareness with provincial preparedness workshops in high fire risk areas. Participants included local government senior officials, first responders such as police and fire, emergency program coordinators, other ministries, INAC, etc. The potential fire hazard was the key component.

Public Information Web Site

A unified Web site was used for Fire Season 2003. The PEP Web site at: www.pep.bc.ca provided "one window" access for both the emergency managers from across all levels of government to broadcast information, and for those seeking information. The PEP Web site had over 8 million hits during August—the peak month of fires (a normal monthly average is 200,000).

Private Information Web Site

During Firestorm 2003, numerous private information Web sites became available to the general public. The most prominent of these was a site known as "CastaNet," operated out the city of Kelowna. This particular site provided timely and accurate public information, and PEP included this site in its links.

Emergency Public Information

There was a continuous release of public information announcements during the 2003 fire season, which provided information on the fire risk, preparedness, evacuations and public safety in general. Information was also available on a PEP pre-recorded toll free line.

Call Centres

Numerous call centres were activated both provincially and locally to provide public information. Most of them were activated on a 24-hour basis. The Red Cross also activated a call centre to provide information about evacuees to family and friends.

Ad Campaign

The MOF ran a public ad campaign throughout Vancouver Island, the Thompson Okanagan and the Kootenays from July 14th through September 23rd on Shaw Cable. The ad focused on the need for adequate insurance coverage to protect residents from losses due to wildland fire. The ads ran once every hour, 24 hours a day, for the designated period.

Other information

PEP also distributes the Red Cross "One Step at a Time Guide to Fire Recovery." In partnership with the other ministries, PEP developed a public activity communications plan for emergency public information in preparation for the fire season.

The publicity during and following the 2003 fire disaster has heightened awareness of the interface fire risk for both local governments and the general public. As a consequence, there is a strong desire to learn from this disaster and apply the lessons learned.

Work Action:

- *In the McLure/Barriere area of the province, a significant number of residents whose homes were destroyed did not have fire insurance. In past years, PEP funded the placement of advertisements (cost $25,000) in approximately 100 local newspapers located in high-risk areas, which encouraged people at risk to purchase fire insurance. The placement of an ad encouraging the purchase of fire insurance will once again be pursued for the 2004 fire season.*
- *The "One Step at a Time Guide to Fire Recovery" is in need of updating and reprinting to include information about cleaning up after various fire retardant gels are used. PEP will pursue funding to update this publication jointly with the Red Cross and post it to the Web.*
- *MOF plans to promote Fire Smart principles by means of a public campaign in 2004, provided funding is available.*

5. The Ministry of Forests should continue to have a significant role in developing and delivering programs to raise community awareness about interface fire risks, and should formalize its plans for doing this work.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services issues.

Status: Substantially implemented.

In 2002, the MOF adopted the *Fire Smart Program* with the intent to replace the original "Beware and Prepare" initiative. The Fire Smart product is more current and user friendly.

MOF is participating as a partner, with other jurisdictions across Canada, particularly Alberta, in editing the current product for release in 2003. The finished product has the potential to become a national standard for interface issues.

An information booth and presentation to the BC Planners' Institute regarding Fire Smart principles and the planners' role was conducted in Nelson during the first week of May 2003.

Work Action:

- *The original release date planned for the spring of 2003 has been rescheduled to December 2003, due to the 2003 fire disaster and other workload pressures. The delay will allow for additional material related to the 2003 fire disaster to be added to the manual.*
- *A provincial template for standardizing MOF fire prevention planning was implemented for 2003.*
- *All zones, in each Fire Centre, are expected to develop a customized prevention program that will work for each specific geographic area based on local issues and related fire cause problems. A review of these plans is scheduled over the winter months to determine the effectiveness of these plans and make recommendations for improvements where necessary.*
- *A series of supplemental public information pamphlets regarding interface fire protection measures is planned. The first, named "How to Make Your Forest Home and Property Fire Smart," was printed and distributed in late August.*
- *Another symposium regarding Fire Prevention and the Urban Interface is scheduled for mid-March 2004, in Penticton. The goal is to target local government officials and planners responsible for developing bylaws and building code requirements.*
- *The MOF has been requested to speak on interface fires at a meeting of the Regional District Planners scheduled for October 29th in Victoria.*

6. **The** Provincial Emergency Program **should encourage emergency program coordinators to discuss interface fire risks with local emergency planning committees and to seek the involvement of the committees in raising public awareness about the risks.**

Status: Fully Implemented

(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

PEP staff, particularly the PEP Regional Managers, have frequent direct contact with community emergency planners and continuously encourage, provide subject matter expertise and support in the development of emergency plans in general, and interface fire plans specifically.

PEP staff conducts an annual emergency preparedness survey to assess the level of preparedness of local authorities and regional districts. The existence of a local interface fire plan is a component of this survey:

- 25 out of 106 communities surveyed included a specific reference to interface fire in their emergency plan, those communities being ones with a potential interface risk.
- A number of Work Action: initiatives flow from the survey results.
- The Regional Managers take into account the level of individual community preparedness in the development of a three-year community training matrix.
- The projects flow directly from a needs analysis of the survey results.

PEP staff are active participants on numerous regional interface committees.

The interface fire hazard will continue to be a focus of the PEP program.

Early in 2003, PEP promoted education/awareness with 400 elected officials by conducting 19 workshops, with one of the focuses being on the interface fire hazard.

Throughout May and June of 2003, PEP held provincial preparedness meetings in high fire risk areas, including Web-based presentations and conference calls. The 350 participants of these provincial preparedness meetings included local government senior officials, first responders such as police and fire, emergency program coordinators, the medical community, INAC, other ministries, etc. The potential fire hazard was the key component.

Interface fire hazard exercises were conducted in May and June with TEAMS members.

Part IV: Assessing the Risks

7. The Interface Fire Committee should encourage organized areas of the province to assess interface fire risks in their communities.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services issues.

Status: Fully Implemented

PEP will continue to actively encourage the conduct of a Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment by every local authority as required by the Emergency Program Act and regulations.

Risk assessment is a critical emergency planning tool and as such, PEP has demonstrated national leadership in the development of a Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA) self-assessment, which includes an interface fire hazard section. This tool is now available province-wide as an interactive Web application and can be used by municipal emergency planning committees to prioritize local risks and identify opportunities for risk reduction.

In addition, within the last year, PEP has developed a more comprehensive HRVA tool kit binder which can be downloaded from the PEP Web site.

The online Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA) product is accessible at http://www.pep.bc.ca/hrva/hazard.html The online tool is interactive and gives immediate results.

The comprehensive, yet simple to use, HRVA tool kit binder has been reviewed by a sample of local community emergency coordinators and the PEP Regional Managers. Version 2 is now registered with the National Library of Canada and published to the PEP Web site at http://www.pep.bc.ca/hrva/tool kit.pdf.

PEP, with involvement of Interface Fire Committee members, continues to develop, implement and sponsor highly successful local government workshops such as the 19 elected officials' workshops in Spring 2003, which over 400 elected officials attended.

A senior emergency officials' course is under development by PEP and the Justice Institute (JI), and will be available for delivery in early 2004. Nine of these PEP-funded training courses are scheduled for delivery by the JI in January, February and March of 2004.

The list of users of the HRVA tool kit is growing. The tool kit has been used by the Sun Peaks Ski Resort, Thompson-Nicola Regional District to prepare their evacuation plan, the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District to prepare their Emergency Response Plan, as well as for the hazard analysis for the successful 2010 Olympic Bid.

Work Action:

- *Promote awareness and preparedness of the interface fire hazard in advance of the 2004 fire season.*
- *Review and incorporate suggestions as appropriate as more local governments and agencies use the HRVA tool kit.*

8. The Ministry of Forests should complete hazard mapping of unorganized areas of the province over a reasonable time-period, with emphasis on high and moderate risk areas.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services issues.

Status: Partially Implemented

The majority of hazard mapping work throughout the high risk southern portions of the Province (Kamloops, Coastal and South East Fire Centres) was done prior to the release of the Auditor General's report.

Current Status

Coastal Fire Centre (FC)—all Coastal Fire Centre areas were mapped in 1996/97. Information was updated in 2000, with plans to update every 2-3 years. The information has been digitized and is available on the protection dispatch system.

South East FC—all South East Fire Centre areas were mapped in 1998. About 30 per cent of the SE Fire Centre was remapped over the winter of 2002/03 (Invermere and Boundary zones).

Prince George FC—portions of the Prince George Fire Centre have been mapped, the Prince George zone was mapped in 1997/98; however, the information currently requires updating and finalization. Some older, outdated mapping exists for Tumbler Ridge, One Island Lake, Moberly Lake and Hudson's Hope. Robson Valley has the most recent information for Crescent Spur to the Alberta border, including the Robson area and Valemount, under the McGregor Forest modeling project. A number of communities and unorganized areas remain unmapped.

Cariboo FC—most of the Cariboo Fire Centre was hazard mapped on paper in the early 1990's. Updating and digitization is required.

Kamloops FC—all primary and secondary areas have been assessed and mapped. Digitization of the information is ongoing.

North West FC—the higher hazard areas of the Bulkley Valley, Lakes, and Terrace zones have predominantly been completed during 1996/99. There is no central GIS map database of the information at the Fire Centre and the Plans reside at the Zone offices. More work is required to complete the hazard mapping but, generally, the remaining areas would fall into a low to moderate hazard rating. See http://www.pep.bc.ca/hrva/hazard.html to view the online Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA) product. The online HRVA tool is interactive and gives immediate results. Feedback from the communities mapped to this point has been very low.

The work done to date was done as and when resources were available and focused on working with municipalities that had a developing interface fire problem. Efforts within the interface have been relatively successful in the highest priority areas in southern portions of the province. Protection staff and members of their respective interagency working groups are credited for the work done to date.

A significant amount of hazard mapping information currently exists for the province. Digitization and central storage of the data remains a goal to be completed. Higher priorities within the MOF and Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM) currently take precedence over the ability to undertake this project at this time.

Only a limited number of communities seem to be making any use of the existing information. This may suggest that in unorganized areas, the mapping information will be utilized to a lesser degree.

The Canadian Forest Service, with the assistance of four consulting firms, successfully completed a research project called "Development of Multi-Attribute Risk Assessment and Management Tools for Results-based Fire Management in British Columbia," for the Forest Investment Innovation (FII) in April 2003. The co-operation of BC MOF Protection Program and MOF Cranbrook Forest District was crucial in completing this project, along with other provincial ministries that provided data. Maps provided by the project identify:

- historic natural fire regimes; and
- the condition class of interface areas.

Work Action:

- *The mandate of the Protection Program has been refined to "protecting lives and government assets, particularly timber," within the Ministry of Forests Service Plan. Cost sharing mechanisms are currently being explored in order to determine the level of continued program participation in the wild-land/urban interface.*
- *The MOF remains committed to the continued update of existing information and the addition of new information as priorities, staffing and funds realistically permit.*
- *A number of consultants are available throughout the province to conduct or interpret existing hazard mapping for communities and local governments with the resources available to do so.*

9. The Provincial Emergency Program should complete the development of a BC Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment model and encourage its use at the local level to assess interface fire risks.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services issues.

Status: Fully Implemented

The online Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA) product is accessible at http://www.pep.bc.ca/hrva/hazard.html. The online tool is interactive and gives immediate results.

While there is no requirement for any community to forward their HRVA results to PEP, 15 entities have shared their HRVA analyses with PEP for review.

The list of users of the HRVA tool kit is growing. The tool kit has been used by the Sun Peaks Ski Resort, Thompson-Nicola Regional District to prepare their evacuation plan, the Bulkley Nechako Regional District to prepare their Emergency Response Plan, as well as for the hazard analysis for the successful 2010 Olympic Bid.

The comprehensive, yet simple to use, HRVA tool kit binder has been reviewed by a sample of local community emergency coordinators and the PEP Regional Managers. Version 2 is now registered with the National Library of Canada and published to the PEP Web site at http://www.pep.bc.ca/hrva/tool kit.pdf.

The availability of this tool is emphasised at every workshop and training course. The HRVA tool kit will be a significant part of PEP's Senior Emergency Officials' course currently under development. As well, the Justice Institute is working very closely with PEP as they develop a Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis course for their emergency management certificate program.

Part V: Mitigating the Risks

10. The Interface Fire Committee should encourage high and moderate risk communities to take practical steps to mitigate interface fire risks.

The task of reducing the fuel loading is very large in nature. Progress will require a long-term partnership between provincial, regional and local governments, private landholders and timber companies. A critical element is the availability of multi-year funding. A significant change in public attitude toward logging and burning near homes and communities is required.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core service issues.

Status: Partially implemented

Fire risk mitigation includes:

- fuel management and reduction;
- species conversion;
- working with land managers to reduce fuel loading;
- thinning and pruning;
- perimeter fire guarding;
- use of fire resistant building material; and
- preventive landscape measures within a 10-metre fuel ignition zone.

The Committee has continued to research best practices and learn from the activities of other jurisdictions.

Communities that have taken mitigation measures compiled by the Ministry of Forests include areas around Merritt, Kamloops, Barnhartvale, Kelowna, West Kelowna, Okanagan Mission, Peachland, Summerland, Penticton, Olalla, Cranbrook, Kimberly, Invermere, Panorama, Fairmont, Creston, Grand Forks and Christina Lake.

The Interface Fire Committee continues to encourage measures which will mitigate the risk as part of a public and community awareness and education efforts.

Work Action:

The introduction of a BC fire risk mitigation strategy would require a commitment of significant funds by both the provincial government and local governments. The committee will endeavour to complete the development of a framework discussion paper for consideration by government, within the 2003/04 fiscal year.

MOF continues to work with high risk communities to take practical steps to reduce the exposure to interface fire. Similarly, liaison work and training by PEP and OFC with fire departments, emergency coordinators and senior officials continues to mitigate risk by increasing preparedness.

Part VI: Establishing Working Relationships Among Response Agencies

11. The Ministry of Forests should:

a) work with local fire departments to address the concerns they have with the Ministry of Forests Operating Guidelines.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core service issues.

Status: Fully Implemented

MOF currently provides an opportunity for local fire departments to address concerns through ongoing liaison.

The initial concerns with local fire departments have been addressed. A resolution was passed at the Fire Chiefs' Association of BC annual meeting confirming support for maintaining the current operating guidelines and rate compensation. This concurrence was reconfirmed at an October 17, 2003 meeting between MOF and the Fire Chiefs' Association.

Although this recommendation has been fully implemented, the operational reality is that annual reviews and updates will continue to identify opportunities for change and improvements.

b) work with local fire departments and emergency response staffs in high and moderate interface fire areas to improve the application of unified command.

Status: Fully Implemented

The MOF continues to have numerous ongoing annual exercises across the province to improve the application of unified command between fire departments and wild-land fire fighters. For example, in the Spring of 2002 the Coastal Fire Centre conducted interface fire simulations that promoted the use of unified command with over 20 fire departments.

The Incident Command System (ICS) based BC Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) has been mandated for use by all provincial ministries and agencies and is recommended for adoption by local governments and other organizations operating within the province.

Numerous annual exercises are scheduled and conducted on a regular basis throughout the province, providing a learning platform for representatives from all response agencies. The response to the 2003 fire season, by all agencies, is a reflection of the success of these joint exercises.

Work Action:

- *A fire season review has been ordered by the Premier. The review will identify what worked well and where improvements are required. Improvements will be made from the recommendations as they are identified.*

12. The Office of the Fire Commissioner **should:**

a) work with local fire departments to identify practical solutions to the current impediments to fire department response outside prescribed boundaries.

Status: Alternative Action

Provision of every day fire services out of boundaries:

This recommendation must be considered in two parts:

i) Provision of every day fire services out of boundaries; and

ii) The provision of out of boundary fire services during a fire disaster.

Under the new Local Government Act, fire protection and suppression is a discretionary service of local governments and the level of that service is a function of the council's willingness and ability to pay. Many communities do not have the tax base to allocate the necessary funds to fire protection or to emergency preparedness to the extent anticipated by the province.

While a local government/fire protection area may pass a bylaw authorizing a response outside of boundaries in special circumstances, the Local Government Act requires them to have agreements with all parties for service delivery outside their jurisdiction. Many service providers/supporters therefore consider the provision of fire services outside normal jurisdiction as an unacceptable concession to those citizens who have already chosen not to fund the service. Furthermore, most municipalities are reluctant to leave their own jurisdiction due to liability, insurance and funding issues.

As a pro-active measure, the OFC published a manual entitled "Establishing and Operating a Fire Department." This manual was distributed to all fire departments and local government administrators in the province. The content of the manual discussed response outside prescribed boundaries (mutual aid) and made recommendations for implementation of bylaws in such cases.

Work Action:

The Service Plans for Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (CAWS) and the OFC respect the autonomy of local governments as described in the Community Charter. This has required that the OFC refocus its activities from those involving local government operational fire service issues and concentrate its resources on fire prevention and public fire safety awareness. Since the "Establishing and Operating a Fire Department" manual deals with operational fire service matters the development of this manual no longer comes under the revised mandate of the OFC. Other fire service organizations have been approached to continue with the production of the manual, but there has been limited interest to date.

Provision of out of boundary fire services during a State of Provincial Emergency:

A declaration of a provincial state of emergency authorizes the Fire Commissioner, under section 9 of the Emergency Preparedness Act, to take control of all fire departments, equipment and staff within the province.

During Firestorm 2003, the Office of the Fire Commissioner created, under the provincial state of emergency, a provincial department and a number of regional fire departments, each with an appointed fire chief. This structure managed the deployment of 167 pieces of equipment and in excess of 400 fire fighters in support of 28 communities who where at imminent risk.

The regional fire service fire departments are under the direction of a single command structure, comprised of senior fire service officers who are able to redirect resources to the areas most at risk. This concept

provides operational flexibility by allowing individual fire departments to deal with local incidents within their own municipal boundaries while having the ability to respond outside their jurisdiction during a state of emergency.

Work Action:

OFC, in cooperation with MOF and PEP, will continue to recruit and train senior fire service members to assume command positions within the Incident Command System;

b) Work with communities to identify practical ways to improve public safety in populated areas of the province that lack fire department services.

Status: Partially Implemented

This recommendation is one that can never be fully implemented as it requires ongoing long-term attention and is one of the core services provided by the OFC.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) and the committee are actively engaged in public education and awareness, which includes those areas of the province that currently lack fire protection services.

The OFC public education program provides leadership in fire safety education, with provincial initiatives such as the Learn Not to Burn program, National Fire Prevention Week activities and a Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention program. In addition, the office provides regular public safety announcements and publishes brochures covering fire and life safety.

"Establishing and Operating a Fire Department" is sent to all local government administrators in the province. This would cover all regional areas as well as municipal jurisdictions. Fire departments are generally established under bylaw. There is no requirement for the local government to notify the provincial government or OFC of its bylaws or the services provided under bylaw. A few fire departments are established as societies and may not have defined boundaries. These fire departments do not have to report their boundaries, even if defined, to the OFC. This being said, the OFC does have a list of fire departments posted on its Web page.

OFC does not have a list of areas not protected, as fire protection is a local government responsibility. However, the OFC participates in all regional interface committees and, through these committees,

encourages fire prevention information be distributed to all areas within the region, whether protected by a fire department or not. An example of such an initiative is the manual "Fire Safe Inside and Out," jointly prepared and produced by the OFC and MOF, Forest Protection Branch (FPB).

The South East Region Kootenay Interface Steering Team (KIST) is an excellent example of a fully functional committee. In this area, every building permit issued in an interface area includes a public education information bulletin regarding Fire Smart suggestions for construction materials, fuel modification programs and land clearing. Regional Interface Fire Committees have been established throughout the province.

This prevention manual was widely distributed throughout the province and placed in local libraries.

OFC has also completed publication of an new education manual called "Getting to Know Fire." This manual is a comprehensive fire and life safety curriculum created for use by fire services members. Everyone in the fire service can use "Getting to Know Fire." The curriculum provides accurate messages on a variety of fire and life safety topics for preschool-aged children through to seniors. The curriculum is intended to assist the fire service to meet the public fire and life safety education needs of their communities. "Getting to Know Fire" can be used to enhance existing public education programs or as the foundation for creating a new one. It is simple, easy to use, and provides a source for consistent message delivery. Although this manual has broad-based application, it does not presently focus on wild-land interface forest fires.

Work Action:

- *OFC has provided resources to help develop and include in the Getting to Know Fire a component that specifically addresses all aspects of wild-land interface forest fires. Working together, PEP and MOF will be compiling relevant information and working directly with OFC staff in this development. It was initially envisioned that this component would be completed by April 1, 2003.*
- *The Interface Fire Committee, as one of its tasks, was asked to provide input into the Getting to Know Fire manual. They in-turn have solicited input from the regional interface committees. As explained in the response to the recommendations in Part 1, because of limited resources, priority was given to the Fire Smart program. This has resulted in a delay in finalizing the interface fire component in the Getting to Know Fire manual.*

- *The provision of interface fire public information along with building permits will be considered as a possible province-wide initiative.*
- *Public education and awareness will continue to be a major focus of both the committee and the individual ministries.*

Part VII: Accessing Additional Firefighting and Emergency Response Resources

13. The Office of the Fire Commissioner should identify the impediments to mutual aid agreements in some fire departments in the province and recommend practical solutions.

Status: Alternative Action

Under the new Local Government Act, local governments must have agreements with all parties for service delivery outside their jurisdiction.

The provision of mutual aid services is a contractual agreement between local governments. Although the province recognizes the autonomy of the local governments to enter into such agreements and, as such, does not interfere, the province does endorse the use of mutual aid contracts between local government fire services and will continue to encourage their development.

While there are many very good mutual aid agreements in place in the province there are areas where they do not exist because one or more of the departments do not see a benefit to such an agreement.

Trying to convince a department that there is a benefit is some times difficult. An example of this may be: Department A has good equipment, lots of water carrying capabilities and well-trained seasoned fire fighters. Department B has very poor equipment very limited water carrying capabilities and poorly trained fire fighters. There may be a benefit to Department B to have a mutual aid agreement with Department A, but little or no benefit to Department A. (This is a very real example, as there are no specific requirements or enforced standards for a fire department in the province.) Another example where there is limited benefit in developing a mutual aid agreement is when an unacceptable travel distance between departments.

The Interface Fire Committee, PEP and the OFC encourage the development of agreements when preparing both integrated regional emergency plans and a regional integrated concept of operations. A recent workshop in the GVRD reached agreement to develop a region wide emergency response and recovery capability for specific functions.

An adequate response to major dangerous materials events is often dependant upon mutual aid agreements with neighbouring jurisdictions.

MOF has a blanket agreement with fire departments for suppressing wild-land and interface fires.

Work Action:

The OFC will continue to work with local authorities to promote the benefits of mutual aid agreements.

Part VIII: Planning Community Emergency Response

General Response:

It is PEP's view that support and guidance need to be broadly based on an all-hazard model and not narrowly focused on interface fire only.

Local authorities continue to have access to federal Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) funding for emergency program development, including response plans and infrastructure.

PEP's plan to support communities where emergency preparedness deficiencies are revealed, was officially launched in November 2001 at the Emergency Preparedness conference as the Disaster Resilient Communities Initiative.

Since then, PEP has formed a joint steering committee with representatives from the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, the Partnerships for Safer Communities and others to help guide the Disaster Resilient Communities Program.

The nature of this support to communities is the provision of tools to develop and improve community emergency management programs. These tools include: the Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA) online tool, the HRVA tool kit , a Community Emergency Management Guide (in revision), and the Community Emergency Program Review (CEPR) online tool.

All these tools empower a community to help itself, backed up by support from PEP Regional Managers and staff. PEP Regional Managers, in areas with interface fire risk, meet with community leaders/emergency coordinators regularly to facilitate expert presentations on interface fire risk, weather and current and forecast threats. These working groups discuss interface fire mitigation, preparedness options and current activities in the community.

It must be clearly understood that PEP recognizes the need to support and provide subject matter expertise and advice to communities, and the Service Delivery Strategy #2, is a multi-year plan to move forward in this regard. Progress is and will continue to be impacted by other workload priorities and resource limitations.

14. The Provincial Emergency Program **should:**

a) Encourage all areas of the province with high or moderate interface fire risks to put plans in place to deal with such emergencies, and to develop the ability to enact the plans when needed.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002):

A good example of how PEP provides subject matter expertise that supports communities in both the development and enactment of emergency plans is the distribution of the Emergency Declaration Guidelines in July 2002.

All municipal governments are required by legislation to have an emergency program, emergency plans and the ability to implement the plans; PEP provides subject matter expertise and support in accordance with existing workload priorities and resource limitations.

PEP has encouraged all communities to develop their readiness capability and adopt an all-hazard response to disaster events, and will continue to do so as part of the emergency program service delivery.

Between September 2002 and March 2003 a variety of exercise and training courses were funded by PEP and delivered by the Justice Institute throughout the province.

There are three 2-day introductory training courses to initiate participants to the concept of analyzing the need for an exercise in their community or agency. The training, in Castlegar, New Aiyansh/Nisga and Victoria, provides the basics on the various types of exercises and exercise development.

There were six 2-day table top exercise training courses held in: Kamloops, Fernie, Bella Coola, Prince George, Valemont, and New Westminster. Municipalities and agencies are encouraged to send several members so they can work as a group on practice disaster

scenarios and exercise materials that will be useful to their municipality or agency. The training provides a hands-on opportunity at the table top exercise level to develop materials, participate in planning, facilitate an exercise and evaluate an exercise.

There was also a 2-day training session on full scale exercises held in New Westminster in February 2003. This training provided an opportunity for hands-on participation on an exercise planning team, chairing an exercise planning team, conducting an exercise, arranging the logistics and administrative support for an exercise, and evaluating and preparing evaluation reports.

The above are courses specific to exercises; there are many other courses available, such as emergency evacuation, introduction to emergency management, etc. that will help communities and agencies as they practice and prepare for disasters;

b) Review community emergency plans periodically, giving specific attention to interface fire planning.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

PEP staff conduct an annual emergency preparedness survey to assess the level of preparedness of local authorities and regional districts. The existence of an interface fire plan is a component of this survey.

Twenty-five out of 106 communities surveyed included a specific reference to interface fire in their emergency plan. Those communities were ones with a potential interface risk.

PEP Regional Managers take into account the level of individual community preparedness in the development of a three-year training matrix.

A number of Work Action: initiatives flow from the survey results;

c) Finalize development of a formal process for assessing the preparedness level of local authorities and assess each community's level of preparedness on a regular basis.

Status: Substantially Implemented

A Community Emergency Preparedness Review (CEPR) template document has been completed in draft and a software assessment application tool is currently available on the PEP Web site at http://www.pep.bc.ca/cepr/review.html.

The BC Fire Chiefs' Association has been consulted regarding the incorporation of the NFPA 1600 standard in community emergency preparedness standards.

PEP Regional Managers review the status of local government regional programs on a continuing basis.

Elected officials were introduced to the CEPR assessment tool in the spring of 2003.

Work Action:

- *CEPR will be part of the Senior Emergency Officials courses being developed for 2004.*
- *PEP Regional Managers will develop a regional schedule and implementation plan to provide community level support for CEPR once the annual interface fire threat is diminished to a pre-2003 level.*
- *The Community Emergency Management Guide (formerly the Local Authority Planning Guide) will be revised over the next two years.*

d) Develop a detailed implementation plan to provide support at the community level where assessments reveal emergency preparedness deficiencies.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Partially Implemented

It is PEP's view that support and guidance needs to be broadly based on an all-hazard model and not narrowly focused on interface fire only.

With PEP support, local authorities continue to have access to federal JEPP funding for emergency program development, including response plans and infrastructure.

PEP's plan to support communities where emergency preparedness deficiencies are revealed, was officially launched at an Emergency Preparedness Conference as the Disaster Resilient Communities

Initiative. Since then, PEP has formed a joint steering committee with representatives from the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, the Partnerships for Safer Communities and others to help guide the Disaster Resilient Communities Program.

The nature of this support to communities is the provision of tools to develop and improve community emergency management programs. These tools include: the HRVA online tool, the HRVA tool kit (in development), a Local Authority Emergency Management Guide (in revision), and the Community Emergency Program online tool.

All these tools empower a community to help itself, backed up by support from PEP Regional Managers and staff. PEP Regional Managers, in areas with interface fire risk, meet with community leaders/emergency coordinators regularly to facilitate expert presentations on interface fire risk, weather and current and forecast threats. These working groups discuss interface fire mitigation, preparedness options and current activities in the community.

It must be clearly understood that PEP recognizes the need to support and provide subject matter expert advice to communities, and the Service Delivery Strategy #2, is a multi-year plan to move forward in this regard. Progress is and will continue to be impacted by other workload priorities and resource limitations.

PEP's implementation plan to support communities is part of our Service Delivery Plan. This plan, which is updated annually, details both preparedness and response strategies and projects.

It is PEP's view that support and guidance need to be broadly based on an all-hazard model. Nevertheless, PEP continues to provide support at the community level for interface fire, seismic and flood preparedness based upon threat assessment. For example, PEP Regional Managers, in areas with interface fire risk, meet with community leaders/emergency coordinators regularly to facilitate expert presentations on interface fire risk, weather and current and forecast threats. These working groups discuss interface fire mitigation, preparedness options and current activities in the community.

Work Action:

The Service Delivery Strategy, "Promote Disaster Resilient Communities," is a multi-year plan to move forward in this regard. Progress is and will continue to be impacted by other workload priorities and resource limitations.

Part IX: Training Firefighters and Other Emergency Responders

15. The Interface Fire Committee should work with communities to improve training of local firefighters and other emergency responders, with an emphasis on high and moderate risk locations.

The Interface Fire Committee has no dedicated funding and is primarily engaged in the sharing of subject matter expertise and coordinating the individual activities of MOF, OFC and PEP. Each of the program area are, however, engaged in training activities.

This is a two-part recommendation:

a) Emergency responders

b) Local firefighters

a) Emergency Responders

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Substantially Implemented

Justice Institute Training and Regional Training

Broad-based emergency management training continues to be provided to emergency responders by a number of certified institutions, companies and individuals. BCERMS and ICS are the best practise endorsed by the province, and now followed by all first response agencies and the majority of local governments. PEP continues to advocate the benefits of training at every opportunity, and in the past year has developed a training and exercise section of the PEP Web site to ensure easy access to the calendar of PEP-funded training for the province and to share information about exercises.

PEP regional offices are each provided with a $10,000 training budget to support community training. For the past 13 years PEP has an annual $550,000 contract with the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) to provide training throughout BC to emergency responders and a variety of volunteers, and to the search and rescue community. About 1,500 emergency responders and volunteers are trained each year in BC communities, and the training often includes fire examples or exercises.

In order to deliver a wider offering of basic emergency management training, PEP had the JI provide train-the-trainer training to each Regional Manager and the Headquarters Emergency Management Analysts. The Regional Managers now deliver the basic introduction to emergency management course as communities request it.

PEP also developed standardized emergency management introductory material for all training courses, regardless of who delivers the course. This provides an overview of emergency management in BC and encourages the utilization of our Web-based tools.

The importance of training local fire fighters and other emergency responders was highlighted in the 19 Elected Officials' Workshops delivered by PEP staff in the spring of 2003. A new course specifically designed for Senior Emergency Officials such as fire chiefs, administrators, etc. is under development (by the Justice Institute and PEP) for PEP-funded delivery throughout BC as part of the training PEP makes available to BC communities, and has been identified by PEP management as the training priority for the remainder of this fiscal year.

Local government training and exercising in regards to incidents of larger scope is strongly supported by the province, including local government exercises involving full activation of Emergency Operations Centres, large-scale evacuations, and multiple incident sites or wide area impact events. The province will also partner with local governments in conducting exercises, including interface fire exercises. The exercises usually include a wide variety of emergency responders.

The BCERMS Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of the Inter-agency Emergency Preparedness Council (IEPC), developed guidelines for BCERMS trainers and for BCERMS training materials. The guidelines support an integrated response to emergencies, and include an approval, rejection and appeal process. All IEPC-approved BCERMS trainers are promoted on the PEP Web site.

The PEP HVRA software on the PEP Web site assists local governments in determining their training and exercising strengths and areas for improvement.

TEAMS training is usually a twice a year 2-day session where an exercise is held to gain more experience in emergency management. This year's spring training focused on a wild-land fire scenario.

b) Local Firefighters

Status: Partially Implemented

Tactical interface fire training is directly provided in partnership with local government by Forest Protection Branch (FPB) and OFC. Development of the S-205 training course has been completed and training has commenced to specifically address training local fire fighters about wild-land fire suppression techniques. Other courses including S100 - Basic Fire Suppression & Safety Training, S10A – annual S100 re-currency training, and Incident Command System training, also provide further background information for local fire fighters. FPB and OFC staff also train directly with fire fighters in regards to the tactical aspects of interface fires, in particular in spring in preparation for fire season.

An S-205 training course is under development to specifically address training local fire fighters about wild-land fire suppression techniques. Other courses including S100 - Basic Fire Suppression & Safety Training, S10A – annual S100 re-currency training, and Incident Command System training, are also providing further background information for local fire fighters.

Work Action:

A detailed review of the lessons learned from the 2003 fire disaster is underway. The review is expected to include an assessment of the adequacy of training for interface fire fighting. A preliminary assessment of the 2003 fire season has shown the value of a recent innovation of using agricultural irrigation sprinklers in an urban environment (this system is commonly referred to as "community sprinklers") in protecting threatened structures under certain conditions. The OFC will be promoting the use of "community sprinklers" to offset deficiencies their communities may have in interface fire suppression capabilities.

16. The Provincial Emergency Program **should:**

a) Finalize the training aspects of the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System as quickly as possible and communicate the standard to all local authorities and regional districts.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

The British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) is complete and signed off by provincial agencies. BCERMS Overview documentation and all supporting documentation are available on the PEP Web site. BCERMS continues to be entrenched in local government planning, preparedness, training, response, and recovery.

In recent incident activity (i.e. 2002 Freshet flooding, Firestorm 2003), use of BCERMS at both the local and provincial levels has clearly proven its worth.

The BCERMS Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of the Inter-agency Emergency Preparedness Council (IEPC), developed guidelines for BCERMS trainers and for BCERMS training materials. The guidelines support an integrated response to emergencies, and include an approval, rejection and appeal process. All IEPC-approved BCERMS trainers are identified on the PEP Web site;

b) Devise practical ways to speed the delivery of Emergency Response Management System training to fire departments and local emergency response staff.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

The Office of the Fire Commissioner has delivered the BCERMS model of ICS 100 to over 600 structural fire fighters in the Kootenay and Interior regions of the province.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner has also delivered this program at the BC Fire Chiefs' Association annual conference in 2001. The BC Fire Chiefs' Association has endorsed the BCERMS model of ICS as their recommended standard.

Additional training is available on a fee-for-service basis.

Part X: Equipping Firefighters and Other Emergency Responders

17. The Interface Fire Committee **should identify local fire departments in high and moderate risk locations that lack suitable firefighting and communications equipment, and work with the communities to resolve the deficiencies.**

Status: Not Implemented

The Committee does not feel they are in a position to implement this recommendation as fire protection under the Local Government Act is a discretionary local government service and as such, the type and quantity of firefighting and communications equipment depends on local taxpayer support.

18. The Provincial Emergency Program **should encourage local fire and emergency response agencies to test radio communications annually and to acquire access to key frequencies.**

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

PEP does not generally interface with the 400 plus local fire departments, as this is the responsibility of the OFC. PEP does interface with all local community emergency managers.

PEP is fully cognizant of the fact that communication is a critical component of every emergency response, and that every emergency plan must take into account a hierarchy of communication options and the possibility of degradation of capacity due to the impact of the emergency or disaster.

The Provincial Emergency Radio Communication Service (formerly known as Amateur Radio) has 1,400 volunteers who provide emergency radio communication services during emergencies and exercises. This is one of five public safety lifeline volunteer programs supported by PEP.

Radio Communications Exercises

PEP radio volunteers and PEP staff verify the functionality of the amateur radio capability every Wednesday.

There is a major amateur radio exercise conducted in the lower mainland each year, known as TOPHAT. This exercise provides an opportunity to test radio communication capabilities.

PEP recognizes the need to validate its radio capability to make contact with primary stakeholders and practice the transmission of scenario messages on a regular basis.

Frequency Issues

In regards to frequencies, fire departments who request access to PEP frequencies are provided limited access, depending on the purpose of their request. For example, some departments are involved in road rescue or swift water rescue and specifically request frequencies common with local SAR teams.

From 1991 to the present, PEP has issued a total of 18 letters of permission for fire departments to access PEP frequencies issued. This would not include fire departments equipped under the umbrella of their local emergency program (e.g. Saanich).

We do not encourage fire departments to request permission for PEP frequency access due to current concerns around frequency congestion.

Because these frequencies only provide short range VHF communication, any testing must be organized at the local community level.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner has made its radio frequency available to all fire departments who have requested it as well as MOF. It has been used successfully in many areas of BC.

Work Action:

- *PEP, in partnership with the volunteers, validated its radio capability to make contact with primary stakeholders, for example, Washington State EMO, BC Hydro, BC Gas, and other primary stakeholders.*
- *PEP, in partnership with the volunteers, established a process to test the capability to transmit scenario messages by radio and document the results on a regular basis.*
- *PEP radio volunteers were included in the May and June 2003 TEAMS training, and the exercise was designed with an emergency radio component.*

Part XI: Planning to Evacuate Communities

19. The Provincial Emergency Program should:

a) Develop clear guidelines on evacuation planning and make them available to community officials.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW–July 2002)

The Provincial Emergency Program, in conjunction with the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC)—Emergency Management Division, has developed a tool for local authorities entitled "Operational Guidelines for Evacuation." The guidelines are available province-wide on the PEP Web site;

b) Include assessment of evacuation planning as part of the proposed overall assessment of the preparedness level of each local authority.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW–July 2002)

This is included as part of the general community emergency preparedness review.

c) Offer training courses on evacuation planning.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW–July 2002)

The JIBC, under contract to PEP, delivers an evacuation course. Refer to the PEP-funded training calendar on the Web. In addition, the JIBC offers evacuation training on a fee-for-service basis.

Additional Comments 2003 Fire Disaster

Using the authority of the Fire Services Act, OFC issued 64 evacuation orders and 89 evacuation alerts between July 15, 2003, and Sept 15, 2003.

The evacuation of more than of 50,000 citizens was accomplished with no significant problems. Emergency social service volunteers registered and provided provincial support for food and shelter and, when needed, clothing to 37,500 citizens at an estimated cost of $20 million dollars. The management of these activities by local governments with the support of the province is no less than an outstanding accomplishment.

The OFC, in consultation with MOF, was proactive in alerting local governments and residents of any impending interface fire threat by means of media public service announcements and door-to-door contact. Volunteer search and rescue groups proved to be a valuable asset in the conduct of door-to-door alerts.

Emergency Public information

Every evacuation notice, alert order and the ongoing status of every order was immediately posted on the PEP Web site. This provided the general public, emergency responders and the media with up-to-date information on every order. As previously reported, the hit rate for the PEP Web site was more than 8 million for the month of August alone.

Emergency public information related to the alerting process was multifaceted, and included, for instance:

- Police
- Search and Rescue (SAR) volunteers
- Media
- Public meetings
- Reception centres
- Web sites (private and government)
- Call centres

These public information procedures have proven to be exceptionally effective.

Work Action:

- *As part of the event review process, a detailed review of the evacuation planning and implementation procedures will be conducted.*
- *The operational guidelines for evacuation will be revised as necessary.*
- *The current evacuation planning document and the evacuation training course material will also be revised.*

d) Develop a strategy for improving the provincial capability to provide emergency warnings and alerts, including conducting a review of current provincial capabilities in this regard and researching best practices.

This recommendation is one that requires ongoing long-term attention, as it is one of the core services provided by PEP.

Status: Fully Implemented

Transport Canada has, throughout this last year, conducted research into the current warning and alert systems in use throughout the world. Transport Canada is now funding a series of pilot projects to test technology solutions to both national and hazard specific warning systems.

One such contract was awarded to Simon Fraser University (SFU) with respect to the BC tsunami hazard.

PEP has come to the conclusion that a province-wide alert and warning system is not necessary and that the current practice of adopting or developing hazard specific systems to meet specific geographic needs is more efficient and effective. There are at present a number of auto telephone dial systems used by local government and industry.

Interface Fire Alerts and Warnings

The current procedures were validated during the 2003 fire disaster, as 50,000 plus citizens were given notice, alerted or ordered evacuated with no significant problems.

The OFC, in consultation with MOF, were proactive in alerting local governments and residents of any impending interface fire threat by means of media public service announcements and door-to-door contact. In addition, both the MOF and PEP Web sites provided up-to-date information.

Work Action:

As part of Firestorm 2003 a detailed review will be conducted to determine if there are any improvements that can be made.

PEP will continue to work with Transport Canada to monitor potential technology solutions which could have hazard specific application in BC.

Part XII: Testing the Ability to Respond to Major Interface Fires

General Comment

An emergency plan that has not been validated by testing is simply a paper document. PEP proactively participates in and supports the conduct of all validation exercises.

Pep takes an all-hazard approach to the conduct of exercises; however, where a community is at "high risk," PEP works with MOF and OFC to encourage the conducting of a fire hazard exercise.

20. The Provincial Emergency Program **should:**

a) Develop a program to guide local fire departments and emergency responders in developing realistic scenarios for interface fire exercises.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

It should be noted that MOF takes a leadership role in the conducting of interface fire exercises and the development of scenarios for this hazard. Although PEP is a major player, MOF utilizes significant resources in this regard.

PEP funds the provision of exercise training for local authorities through the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC)—Emergency Management Division. The training includes the development of scenarios.

PEP affords priority to JEPP funding applications for the purposes of conducting local emergency exercises.

In those areas which have a historically high risk of interface fires, PEP Regional Managers work closely with local authorities and other provincial government agencies in conducting exercises to train emergency responders in the provision of a coordinated response;

b) Encourage provincial communities to conduct interface fire exercises.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

PEP, through its regional staff, and the Justice Institute Emergency Management Division, encourage BC communities to conduct interface fire exercises.

In exercise training, participants are encouraged to analyze their needs and develop realistic scenarios for their exercises—fire is a universal one. They are also encouraged to test all of their emergency response capabilities.

Encouragement to emergency response agencies is most often verbal, in briefings, presentations and at inter-agency meetings. Importantly, this encouragement, and at many times advice and assistance, is done not just by PEP, but MOF and OFC staff as well.

Numerous exercises and/or briefing/training sessions are held throughout the province to provide information, discuss response, etc. —many of these are under the guise of inter-agency meetings.

The regional Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (TEAMS) training which occurred prior to the 2002 FRESHET included local area emergency managers. While this training focused on the flood hazard, it was applicable to all hazards, including interface fire.

Between September 2002 and March 2003, there were a variety of exercise training courses funded by PEP and delivered by the JIBC throughout the province. Although the training is not specifically aimed at wild-land urban interface forest fires, it is generic in content, and applicable in an all-hazards context (i.e. evacuation planning). Local governments also contract separately for similar training.

In regard to exercises in an all-hazards context, there were three 2-day introductory training courses to initiate participants to the concept of analyzing the need for an exercise in their community or agency. The training, in Castlegar, New Aiyansh/Nisga and Victoria, provides the basics on various types of exercises and exercise development.

There were six 2-day table top exercise training courses taking place in: Kamloops, Fernie, Bella Coola, Prince George, Valemont, and New Westminster. Municipalities and agencies were encouraged to send several members so they could work as a group on practice disaster scenarios and exercise materials that would be useful to their municipality or agency. The training provided a hands-on opportunity at the table top exercise level to develop materials, participate in planning, facilitate an exercise, and evaluate an exercise.

There was also a 2-day training session on full scale exercises held in New Westminster in February 2003. This training provided an opportunity for hands-on participation on an exercise planning team, chairing an exercise planning team, conducting an exercise, arranging the logistics and administrative support for an exercise and evaluating and preparing evaluation reports.

The above were courses specific to exercises; as mentioned, there are many other courses available, such as emergency evacuation, introduction to emergency management, etc. that will help communities and agencies as they practice and prepare for disasters, including wild-land urban interface forest fires.

c) Encourage its own representatives, key provincial response agencies and other affected provincial and local agencies to participate whenever possible, in interface fire exercises conducted by communities.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

In the past, interface fire exercises have primarily been lead by MOF and have involved a multiple of local and provincial government ministries and non-government agencies. Two examples are the Squamish and Nelson exercises.

PEP provides provincial level leadership in encouraging its own representatives, key provincial response agencies and other affected provincial and local agencies to participate, whenever possible, in interface fire exercises conducted by communities.

The PEP Director has stated publicly, including conferences, workshops and working group meetings, that PEP (and the provincial integrated response model), will participate in any exercise. Head-quarters and regional staff have reiterated the same statement. Interface fire exercises are included in this broad-based statement.

The Committee and all ministries encourage, and will continue to encourage, the conduct of exercises.

d) Actively support local communities in the design, conduct and evaluation interface fire exercises conducted by communities.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

PEP in addition to its partner agencies, strongly and pro-actively supports local government in the design, conduct, and evaluation of interface fire exercises conducted by communities. The Justice Institute PEP Academy is under contract to work directly with and support local governments.

NOTE: the expenditure reductions scheduled for April 2004 will result in an end to contracting for JIBC services.

e) Maintain a database of lessons learned and best practices.

Status: Fully Implemented
(COMPLETED FIRST REVIEW—July 2002)

PEP conducts a review and develops lessons learned from every event and exercise.

PEP does not have a separate database, nor does it post lessons learned on the Web. Some local governments would be offended by the publication of this information and the public or media may misinterpret the intent. PEP maintains an electronic lessons learned folder with all relevant material.

The Provincial Emergency Program has standardized the manner in which "lessons learned" are gathered and archived, and action plans are produced for both exercise and operational activities. PEP ensures that all plans and guidelines are placed on the PEP Web site for general review.

The PEP Corporate Services Delivery Plan, for instance, takes into account these lessons and, where appropriate, incorporates action items into program initiatives. For instance, lessons learned from previous incidents, such as the 1998 fire season and 1999 flood season, have resulted in significant changes in the readiness status of the province.

Work Action: items from these incidents solidified four major initiatives that PEP, in some cases working with representatives from across provincial and local governments, has subsequently completed, including the development and implementation of:

- The British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) to standardize response at all levels, including site support, regional and central;
- Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres (PREOCS) and a mobile Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) to maximize response times and provide permanent regional and headquarters operations centres to train in;
- TEAMS to provide well trained and highly skilled emergency managers to staff PREOCs around the province and the PECC; and
- EM/2000, emergency management software that creates significant efficiencies in the management of emergency management information in PREOCs and the PECC.

These major initiatives have been completed and resulted in what has been deemed one of the best provincial-level flood responses ever. These initiatives were a result of post operational Work Action: items from previous incidents, including flooding and fire. These initiatives have created a much improved readiness status that can be applied to all hazards, including wild-land urban interface fire.

f) Develop an annual exercise schedule and encourage communities to follow it.

Status: Fully Implemented

An annual exercise schedule has been developed. It is updated quarterly with information from all PEP staff and critical stakeholders, and posted on the PEP Web site.

An interface fire training exercise was conducted throughout the province in May and June for TEAMS members.

PEP will continue to take a leadership role in the promotion of interface fire exercises in those areas with a high wild-land-urban interface threat.

Part XIII: Recovering from Major Interface Fires

General Comment

Local governments are required by the Emergency Program Act to undertake both response and recovery planning, and are encouraged to undertake business continuation planning to mitigate the potential impact of an emergency or disaster on critical community systems/services.

21. The Provincial Emergency Program **should:**

a) Develop guidelines and examples of recovery planning and make this material available to provincial communities.

Status: Partially Implemented

The provincial Strategy for Recovery/Reconstruction, which is available on the PEP Web site, provides a clear indication of the responsibility of all levels of government. Guidelines for Disaster Recovery Services are also available on the PEP Web site.

Transition from response to recovery

Experience from past large scale disasters in Canada demonstrates that the role of local government is critical and that the transition from response to recovery requires a multifaceted coordinated approach.

There was some confusion with respect to the roles of local government, emergency social services, PEP and the non-profit services providers, such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.

Initial indications following Firestorm 2003 show that there is a need for further work with respect to the transition from response to recovery. The transition proceeded smoothly in the Kelowna area but was problematic in the McLure/Barierre areas. Leadership and coordination are two critical elements.

PEP has hired a recovery coordinator and Un-met Needs Support worker to work with all of the stakeholders engaged in recovery efforts.

PEP is working with the Joint Emergency Liaison Council (JELC) to develop a template recovery plan, suitable for use by all jurisdictions within the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).

Re-Entry Planning

Recovery management encompasses the development and management of re-entry plans that take into account public safety for areas impacted by fire. Large numbers of citizens were very anxious to be allowed to return to their homes, despite the fact that large numbers of dead animals, danger trees, downed power lines, damaged propane tanks and hazardous materials still constituted a serious safety concern.

The conducting of public meetings and the management of group tours of the impacted sites were management tools that work well.

Donation Management

Experience with past disasters has shown just how quickly the management of donations can get out of control.

Donation management of cash donations, materials, goods and labour is a critical and difficult management issue during and following every major disaster. There is a pressing need to develop a donation strategy. Currently no jurisdiction in Canada has developed such a strategy.

Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA)

The ability to deliver financial support in a timely manner is critical.

DFA is designed to offer limited financial assistance to reconstruct or replace only essential items. It does not apply to any hazard where insurance is readily available and therefore does not generally apply to fire hazards. Individuals who cannot afford or choose to not purchase insurance must therefore depend upon service agencies, such as the Red Cross or the Salvation Army, for support.

PEP attends and hosts public meetings immediately following a disaster in order to provide direct and timely information to impacted citizens. In addition, PEP meets with and provides direct assistance to local governments in the preparation of their DFA claims.

The Compensation and Disaster Assistance regulations and DFA guidelines are available on the PEP Web site www.pep.bc.ca

Work Action:

- *Conduct a detailed review of the transition from response to recovery during the fire disaster and compile information on lessons learned.*
- *Direct the conduct of research and best practices into donation management.*
- *In partnership with OVERBC, develop a BC Donation Strategy and share this strategy with local governments.*
- *The Committee, and PEP in particular, will continue to work to develop a recovery plan template for use by small and medium sized communities. Refresh the provincial Strategy for Recovery/Reconstruction, which is available on the PEP Web site, to ensure this planning document is consistent with the any newly developed response model.*

This work is dependant upon the availability of resources and other workload pressures;

b) Include an assessment of recovery planning as part of the proposed overall assessment of the preparedness level of each local authority.

Status: Fully Implemented

PEP has developed a Community Emergency Review (CEPR) self-assessment software tool to enable communities to assess their own level of preparedness. Recovery planning is a component of this assessment tool as well as the *Community Emergency Management Guide*.

The status of recovery planning will be part of the criteria in which the overall preparedness of local authorities will be assessed.

Part XIV: Gathering and Reporting Information

22. The Interface Fire Committee should gather complete and reliable information about the nature and extent of the interface fire issue in the province, and use the information to report on the management of risks in communities with high or moderate risk associated with this hazard.

Status: Partially Implemented

MOF gathers data related to wild-land fires. Interface fire data is gathered by the OFC.

Starting January 1, 2003, the Office of the Fire Commissioner required that all fires attended by local assistants to the Fire Commissioner be reported. This is in the form of an additional check box on the standard reporting form. This will not include fires in remote locations that are, for example, started by nature, accident, or design, and are only actioned by Forest Protection Branch.

Assessing the costs and losses of fires that do not appear to have an actual dollar loss would need some changes to the current reporting system of the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and may be of limited value, i.e., reporting losses incurred in a grass fire appears to be of little value for dollar loss. In some cases, the fire was set to try to improve grass growth and reduce fire hazards. This may be an improvement, not a loss, and difficult to attach a dollar value to the fire as a loss or gain.

The MOF and OFC will be better able to analyse the various causes of fire by gathering fire cause statistics. This will allow for joint co-operation in developing prevention programs in correlation with the specific fire causes.

Work Action:

A review of statistics will be undertaken once all the data is available for the past year. MOF 2003 data will likely not be available until early spring due to the sheer volume of information to compile.

Appendix

Timetable of Reports Issued and Public Accounts Committee Meetings on Managing Interface Fire Risks

June 2001	Office of the Auditor General issues the *2001/2002 Report 1: Managing Interface Fire Risks*. The report contains 38 recommendations.
December 2001	The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts reviews the Auditor General's report.
February 2002	The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts reports the results of its review to the Legislative Assembly in its First Report—Second Session 37th Parliament.
November 2002	Office of the Auditor General issues the first follow-up report to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.
November 2003	Office of the Auditor General issues the second follow-up report to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.
November 2004 *February 2004*	The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts reviews the second follow-up report

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Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Information provided to the Select Standing Committee
on Public Accounts regarding
the follow-up of recommendations in

2001/2002 Report 2:

Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure

November 2003

OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

To the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts

We have carried out a second follow-up review of the implementation of the recommendations in our 2001/02: *Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure,* and enclose the following:

- My opinion on the status provided by the Ministry of Transportation and TransLink.
- A summary of the original report showing the purpose of the review and key findings.
- A summary of the status of recommendations.
- A list of recommendations that have not yet been fully implemented.
- A summary of status of implementation by recommendation.
- The Ministry's and TransLink's representations on the status of recommendations.
- Timetable of reports issued and Public Accounts Committee meetings on our *2001/02: Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure.*

As most of the recommendations have not yet been implemented, we plan to carry out a further follow-up after the Committee has addressed this report.

Wayne Strelioff

Wayne Strelioff, FCA
Auditor General

November 7, 2003

OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

To the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts

This is our report on our follow-up of the recommendations contained in our *2001/02: Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure.*

Information as to the status of the recommendations was provided to us by the Ministry of Transportation and TransLink as of September 2003.

We have reviewed the representations provided by the Ministry of Transportation and TransLink regarding progress in implementing the recommendations in October 2003. The review was made in accordance with standards for assurance engagements established by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, and accordingly consisted primarily of enquiry, document review and discussion.

Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention to cause us to believe that the Status Report on Implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations does not present fairly, in all significant respects, the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in our August 2001 report.

Wayne Strelioff

Wayne Strelioff, FCA
Auditor General

November 7, 2003

Summary of Original Report: 2001/02: Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure

Auditor General's Comments

In 1999, after extensive negotiation with the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), the Province transferred responsibility for Greater Vancouver's public transit, major regional roads and AirCare program to a newly created body—TransLink. This new arrangement was intended to enable local decision making, provide suitable governance, and secure good accountability.

This was a significant event. It involved the devolution of responsibility for services that affect many citizens of British Columbia's largest urban area—services whose delivery is complex, expensive, and often controversial.

In the spring of this year the provincial government asked me to review certain issues arising since TransLink was set up. I consulted with many of the key stakeholders involved, and consistently heard concerns that some aspects of the devolution process were not unfolding as expected. After considering the information needs of the Legislative Assembly and the public, I decided to undertake a review, focusing my examination on three questions.

The first is whether service and financial expectations for regional transit are being met.

The second is whether rapid transit (SkyTrain) expansion in Greater Vancouver will occur as planned. This question has three parts:

- whether the steps necessary to bring the first phase of the expansion into revenue service are being taken;
- how the start-up costs of the first phase of the expansion should be allocated between the provincial government and TransLink; and
- whether planning for subsequent phases of the expansion is proceeding as contemplated in the cost-sharing agreement between the provincial government and TransLink.

The third question is whether the governance structure now in place promotes good governance, accountability and decision-making.

TransLink has been unable to raise the extra revenue needed to meet service and financial expectations

Once TransLink started operations in 1999, it began work on a strategic transportation plan. After extensive public consultation, TransLink obtained approval from both its own board and the GVRD board for a plan that included both service expansion and a new revenue source (a vehicle levy) to help pay for the expansion.

TransLink began to deliver the expanded service called for in the plan—designing new routes and ordering new buses and other equipment.

. . . continued

Continued . . .

Both the service expansion and revenue source were linked to the primary reason that TransLink was set up: namely, to contribute to the success of the region's land use plan. The strategic transportation plan makes the link clear: "To the maximum extent practical and equitable, TransLink should raise the revenues required in ways that shape transportation demand. From this perspective, the 'best' sources of revenues are those directly associated with use of the transportation system."

To collect the vehicle levy, TransLink needed the support of the provincial government. This support the government gave initially but later rescinded. In response, TransLink proposed alternative ways of collecting the levy, or raising the needed extra revenue from another transportation-related source, gasoline tax. Each alternative required provincial support, but the Province declined to give it. The result is that TransLink has stopped its service growth and reduced its recently expanded service to avoid running a deficit (which it is not permitted to do).

Rapid transit expansion in Greater Vancouver is occurring as planned

TransLink has announced that, without the vehicle levy, it will be unable to operate the first portion of the SkyTrain expansion. Also, the Province and TransLink have been unable to reach agreement on two outstanding issues about the SkyTrain expansion: who will pay the start-up costs on the new Millennium line, and whether Bombardier Inc. should be contracted to operate and maintain the system (both existing and expansion lines).

However, despite these differences of opinion, both parties are proceeding with necessary work on the SkyTrain expansion. Construction of the first stage of expansion—the Millennium line—is very close to schedule and budget, as are preparations for start-up of the first part of the line. Planning and other preparatory work for subsequent phases of the SkyTrain expansion are proceeding at a reasonable pace, and generally in accordance with the cost-sharing agreement between the Province and TransLink.

Trust and cooperation must be rebuilt

After examining these issues, I think it is time for the provincial government and TransLink to rebuild the trust and cooperation necessary to make regional transportation work. As a first step, the provincial government should follow through on its commitment to aid TransLink in efficiently collecting the revenue it needs for expansion. In doing this, the government should recognize that, through legislation, it has assigned to the TransLink and GVRD boards of directors a range of revenue sources and the to make decisions about which of these revenue sources TransLink will use. In turn, those boards of directors are publicly accountable for their decisions.

After that first step, I believe the other outstanding issues can be resolved between the parties. In particular, I recommend:

- The principles proposed by a consultant to the Province should be adopted as the basis for determining a reasonable allocation of start-up costs.
- The question of who should operate and maintain the SkyTrain system rests with the Province and should be approached with a focus on ensuring that the taxpayer receives good value for money.

. . . continued

Continued . . .

If the parties are unable to reach agreement on these issues, they can make use of the arbitration provisions in their cost-sharing agreement.

The governance structure needs a number of improvements to promote good governance, accountability and decision-making

I believe that the provincial government, the GVRD and TransLink should review the governance structure now in place for regional transportation, and evaluate whether it is suitable for the long term. The need for adjustments to the governance structure should not be surprising. TransLink started its operations little more than two years ago; its governance structure is complex; and the issues it deals with are not always easy to resolve.

In my opinion, changes to the current governance arrangements would be beneficial. My recommendations to the three parties can be summarized as follows:

The provincial government should:

- Recognize that the purpose of creating TransLink is to transfer responsibility for regional transportation to the region.
- Determine the best way to maintain oversight of TransLink activities, as they affect provincial interests.

The GVRD should:

- Recognize that it controls TransLink and is directly responsible for its success.
- Adopt a sound method of appointing people to TransLink's board.
- Report to the public on its accountability for TransLink.

TransLink should:

- Establish and document the governance rules, accountability methods, and performance evaluation processes to be used by TransLink and its subsidiaries.
- Report more completely on how it fulfills its responsibility for managing the transportation system in Greater Vancouver.

The findings and conclusions presented in this report are based on evidence gathered to mid-June 2001. My staff performed this review in accordance with our Office's professional standards. These standards require us to carry out such tests and procedures as we consider necessary to obtain sufficient evidence to support our conclusions. In gathering this evidence, we reviewed documents prepared by the provincial government, Rapid Transit Project 2000 Ltd. (the provincially owned company undertaking the SkyTrain expansion project), the GVRD, TransLink and its subsidiaries. We also interviewed board members, employees and consultants of these organizations.

This review involved a number of organizations and individuals, all of whom provided us with the information and explanations we required to complete our work. I acknowledge and thank them for their cooperation.

Summary of Status of Recommendations

Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure

Original Issue Date: August 2001

Years followed-up: October 2002 and October 2003

Summary of status at September 2003	OAG	PAC	Further Follow-up Required
Total Recommendations	**19**	**0**	**19**
Fully Implemented	1	0	1
Substantially Implemented	0	0	0
Partially Implemented	18	0	18
Alternative Action	0	0	0
No Action	0	0	0

Recommendations that have not yet been fully implemented

Part III: Does the Governance Structure Promote Good Governance, Accountability and Decision-Making?

5. TransLink should prepare an annual report in a manner that is consistent with current public sector expectations, and conduct an annual general meeting.
6. The GVRD should clearly identify how it will hold TransLink accountable.
7. The Province, TransLink and the GVRD should consider amending the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act so that non-elected members might be included on TransLink's board.
8. The GVRD and TransLink should develop guidelines for nominating potential members to the TransLink board, including a policy on appointment terms, board renewal and the competencies required by the board.

9. The size of TransLink's board should be re-examined and perhaps reduced.

10. The GVRD should identify how it will provide public accountability for its responsibility for TransLink, and consider developing a more complete approach to reporting annually on its transportation-related performance.

11. The Province should reassess its role in the Greater Vancouver regional transportation system with a view to removing impediments to the implementation of TransLink board decisions.

12. The Province should consider changing the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act to eliminate the need for provincially appointed board members.

13. The Province and TransLink should develop oversight arrangements that meet the Province's needs.

14. TransLink should develop and document principles, policies and procedures for the governance of its subsidiaries.

15. TransLink should reassess its approach to making appointments to subsidiary boards.

16. TransLink should document its governance policies and practices in a governance manual.

17. The Province, TransLink and the GVRD should consider amending legislation to clarify the duties of TransLink board members.

18. TransLink should develop comprehensive guidelines that address director duties and conflict-of-interest issues.

19. TransLink should develop a comprehensive program of orientation and continuing education for its board members.

20. TransLink's board should consider establishing the committees needed to support its governance roles, particularly a governance committee and an audit committee.

21. TransLink's board should ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment is carried out and an appropriate risk management strategy developed.

24. TransLink's board should develop a process for regularly evaluating the performance of the board and of its directors.

Summary of Status of Implementation by Recommendation 2001/2002 Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreement between the Province and of TransLink's Governance Structure As at September 2003

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
Part III: Does the Governance Structure Promote Good Governance, Accountability and Decision-Making?					
5. TransLink should prepare an annual report in a manner that is consistent with current public sector expectations, and conduct an annual general meeting at which its performance can be discussed.			✓		
6. The GVRD should clearly identify how it will hold TransLink accountable.			✓		
7. The Province, TransLink and the GVRD should consider amending the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act so that non-elected members might be included on TransLink's board.			✓		
8. The GVRD and TransLink should develop guidelines for nominating potential members to the TransLink board, including a policy on appointment terms, board renewal and the competencies required by the board.			✓		
9. The size of TransLink's board should be re-examined and perhaps reduced.			✓		
10. The GVRD should identify how it will provide public accountability for its responsibility for TransLink, and consider developing a more complete approach to reporting annually on its transportation-related performance.			✓		
11. The Province should reassess its role in the Greater Vancouver regional transportation system with a view to removing impediments to the implementation of TransLink board decisions.			✓		
12. The Province should consider changing the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act to eliminate the need for provincially appointed board members.			✓		
13. The Province and TransLink should develop oversight arrangements that meet the Province's needs.			✓		

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia Recommendations	Implementation Status				
	Fully	Substantially	Partially	Alternative Action	No Action
14. *TransLink should develop and document principles, policies* and procedures for the governance of its subsidiaries.			✓		
15. TransLink should reassess its approach to making appointments to subsidiary boards.			✓		
16. TransLink should document its governance policies and practices in a governance manual.			✓		
17. The Province, TransLink and the GVRD should consider amending legislation to clarify the duties of TransLink board members.			✓		
18. TransLink should develop comprehensive guidelines that address director duties and conflict-of-interest issues.			✓		
19. TransLink should develop a comprehensive program of orientation and continuing education for its board members.			✓		
20. TransLink's board should consider establishing the committees needed to support its governance roles, particularly a governance committee and an audit committee.21. TransLink's board should ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment is carried out and an appropriate risk management strategy developed.			✓		
24. TransLink's board should develop a process for regularly evaluating the performance of the board and of its directors.			✓		

Response from the Ministry of Transportation and TransLink on the status of recommendations outstanding at September 2002

Part II: Will Rapid Transit Expansion in Greater Vancouver Occur as Planned?

4. **The province should analyze its options for dealing with its commitment to offer Bombardier Inc. a SkyTrain operating and maintenance contract, and work with TransLink to reach an agreement on the option that offers the best value for money to taxpayers.**

Status: Fully implemented.

After lengthy negotiation with Bombardier, TransLink concluded that the options that provided best value for money to taxpayers was to continue its own program of operations and maintenance for the SkyTrain system through its subsidiary company, BCRTC rather than outsourcing these functions to Bombardier. An independent consultant's report substantially agreed with TransLink's analysis.

Consequently, following termination of negotiations, Bombardier exercised its option under its vehicle contract with RTP2000 to sell its CATS facility to the Province. The Province completed its purchase of this building in fiscal 2002/03 and has listed it for resale.

Part III: Does the Governance Structure Promote Good Governance, Accountability and Decision-Making?

5. **TransLink should prepare an annual report in a manner that is consistent with current public sector expectations, and conduct an annual general meeting at which its performance can be discussed.**

Status: Partially implemented.

TransLink now issues an annual report and holds annual meetings. TransLink will continue to improve on the annual report and annual meeting process and work towards meeting the current standards for annual reports of public sector agencies.

6. **The GVRD should clearly identify how it will hold TransLink accountable.**

Status: Partially implemented.

TransLink is currently accountable to the GVRD through various mechanisms legislated in the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act. For instance, GVRD appoints 12 out of 15 TransLink board members, must be consulted by TransLink before taking certain actions, ratifies TransLink's strategic transportation plan, and ratifies certain revenue measures before they can be implemented by TransLink. In addition, TransLink's transportation system must support the regional growth strategy and air quality and economic development objectives of the region.

7. **The Province, TransLink and the GVRD should consider amending the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act so that non-elected members might be included on TransLink's Board.**

Status: Partially implemented.

TransLink's Governance Task Force is continuing to explore alternative parameters for an optimal governance framework, including board membership.

The Province continues to participate in the meetings of this Task Force and remains open to the amendment of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act once TransLink concludes its deliberations and brings a set of proposals forward.

It is anticipated that the Task Force will delivery its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD Boards in early 2004.

8. **The GVRD and TransLink should develop guidelines for nominating potential members to the TransLink Board, including a policy on appointment terms, board renewal and the competencies required by the Board.**

Status: Partially implemented.

The GVTA Governance Task Force has considered the establishment of such guidelines. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD Board in early 2004.

8. **The Size of TransLink's Board should be re-examined and perhaps reduced.**

Status: Partially implemented.

The GVTA Governance Task Force has considered this option. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD Boards in early 2004.

10. **The GVRD should identify how it will provide public accountability for its responsibility for TransLink and consider developing a more complete approach to reporting annually on its transportation-related performance.**

Status: Partially implemented.

TransLink is directly accountable to the public on transportation-related performance. For instance: TransLink publishes annual reports on its performance; holds annual general meetings; routinely conducts board meetings in public; receives public delegations at its board meetings; publishes public board agendas and other information on its website; is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and, is legislatively required to consult with the public before making certain decisions.

The Governance Task Force is considering the introduction of annual reporting on transportation-related matters by TransLink to the GVRD. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD Boards in early 2004.

11. **The Province should reassess its role in the Greater Vancouver regional transportation system with a view to removing impediments to the implementation of TransLink Board decisions.**

Status: Partially implemented.

As per Recommendation # 7, the Province remains open to the removal of any remaining impediments to TransLink's decision making following receipt of TransLink's recommendations for changes to its governance structure.

As noted last year, the Province increased the fuel tax in the Greater Vancouver Regional District by $0.02 per litre following TransLink's abandonment of its automobile levy proposal.

It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD Boards in early 2004.

12. The Province should consider changing the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act to eliminate the need for provincially appointed board members.

Status: Partially implemented.

As noted in Recommendation # 7, the Province is awaiting TransLink's Governance Task Force recommendations and subsequent appropriate amendment of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Act.

13. The Province and TransLink should develop oversight arrangements that meet the Province's needs.

Status: Partially implemented.

Progress by the Province and TransLink has occurred. Most significantly, the Province and TransLink have concluded a comprehensive re-negotiation of their *Rapid Transit Cost Sharing Agreement*. The new agreement which is being recommended for adoption by TransLink's Board and will be scheduled for Treasury Board approval respecifies the parties respective responsibilities and obligations and establishes the provincial capital funding envelope that TransLink can utilize in financing its choice of future transit extensions.

Translink has also signed a *Consent and Assumption Agreement* (see Tab 4) under which it has agreed to fulfill certain construction, operating and maintenance obligations including, importantly, operating insurance, under the *Construction and Maintenance and Statutory Right of Way Agreements* that the Province has entered into with Burlington Northern Santa Fe for the occupation of the railroads' lands for the Millennium SkyTrain Lease.

After lengthy negotiations, a lease for the Expo SkyTrain Line was brought into force by way on an Order-In-Council # 0107. Negotiations between the Province and TransLink are well along with respect to a lease for the Millennium SkyTrain Line.

The Province, TransLink (and other funding partners) are negotiating a Heads of Agreement with respect to their respective participation in the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver (RAV) Rapid Transit Line.

14. TransLink should develop and document principles, policies and procedures for the governance of its subsidiaries.

Status: Partially implemented.

A process has been commenced to document principles, policies and procedures for the governance of TransLink subsidiaries. It is anticipated this will be completed for all subsidiaries by early 2004.

15. TransLink should reassess its approach to making appointments to subsidiary boards

Status: Partially implemented.

The GVTA Governance Task Force has considered the involvement of non-elected directors, with specific expertise, on subsidiary boards. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD boards in early 2004. In the interim, the TransLink board has directed staff to identify qualified non-elected candidates, with specific expertise, for subsidiary boards.

16. TransLink should document its governance policies and practices in a governance manual.

Status: Partially implemented.

The content of such a manual will depend largely on the final recommendations of the GVTA Governance Task Force. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD boards in early 2004.

17. The Province, TransLink and the GVRD should consider amending legislation to clarify the duties of TransLink board members.

Status: Partially implemented.

The GVTA Governance Task Force has considered clarifying board duties. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD boards in early 2004.

18. TransLink should develop comprehensive guidelines that address director duties and conflict-of-interest issues.

Status: Partially implemented.

The GVTA Governance Task Force has considered setting guidelines clarifying directors' duties. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD boards in early 2004.A conflict of interest policy for board members is already in place.

19. TransLink should develop a comprehensive program of orientation and continuing education for its board members.

Status: Partially implemented.

A basic directors' handbook and orientation session are currently in place. A more comprehensive orientation and education program will be developed after the GVTA Governance Task Force delivers its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD boards in early 2004.

20. TransLink's board should consider establishing the committees needed to support its governance roles, particularly a governance committee and an audit committee.

Status: Partially implemented.

A Finance and Audit Committee is currently in place. The GVTA Governance Task Force has considered the creation of a governance committee. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD boards in early 2004.

21. TransLink's board should ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment is carried out and an appropriate risk management strategy developed.

Status: Partially implemented.

TransLink recently developed a new vision and mission for the organization along with the core values that shape how we go about achieving our goals. Work began as a "corporate scorecard" to measure and report on our performance. TransLink will be introducing a revised comprehensive business planning process that will include identifying and managing key risks facing the organization.

Processes and practices currently in place to manage key risks include business continuity planning in the event of a major emergency, internal audit and specific security and liability risk assessments by the risk management department.

24. TransLink's board should develop a process for regularly evaluating the performance of the board and of its directors.

Status: Partially implemented.

The Task Force has considered implementation of a board evaluation process. It is anticipated that the Task Force will deliver its final recommendations to the TransLink and GVRD Boards in early 2004.

Appendix

Timetable of Reports Issued and Public Accounts Committee Meetings on report 2001/02: Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure.

August 2001	Office of the Auditor General issues *2001/02: Report 2: Transportation in Greater Vancouver: A Review of Agreements Between the Province and TransLink, and of TransLink's Governance Structure.* The report contains 24 recommendations.
January 2002	The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts reviews the report.
February 2002	The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts tables its report on the results of the review.
November 2002	Office of the Auditor General issues its first follow-up report to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.
November 2003	Office of the Auditor General issues its second follow-up report to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.
February 2004	The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts reviews the second follow-up report.

Appendices

Appendix A

Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts – Legislative Assembly of British Columbia: Guide to the Follow-Up Process

About the Committee:

The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts is an all-party select standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. The committee is currently composed of 11 members, including a Chair and Deputy Chair. The committee is supported in its work by the Office of the Clerk of Committees, which provides procedural advice, and administrative and research support.

The committee's Terms of Reference include, but are not limited to, the following powers:

- Consider all reports of the Auditor General which have been referred to the committee by the Legislative Assembly.
- Sit during a period in which the House is adjourned or recessed.
- Send for persons, papers and records.
- Report to the House on its deliberations.

Committee Meetings:

While the Legislative Assembly is in session, the committee normally meets once per week (currently every Tuesday morning from 8:30 to 10:00, although the committee can sit while the House is sitting, and during the "intersessional" period). Committee proceedings are recorded and published in Hansard, which is available on the Legislative Assembly web site at www.legis.gov.bc.ca/cmt/.

The Auditor General and the Comptroller General are officials of the committee, and are usually present at committee meetings. During meetings, representatives of the Auditor General's office make a presentation of their audit findings. Representatives of audited organizations also attend as witnesses before the committee, and provide information to the committee regarding actions taken to address the Auditor General's recommendations. Following each presentation, committee members are provided with the opportunity to ask questions of witnesses. Members of the Legislative Assembly may examine, in the same manner, witnesses, with the approval of the committee.

After initial consideration of a report, the committee wishes to follow-up the progress made in implementing the Auditor General's recommendations, or recommendations made by the committee to the House, and adopted by the House. The process for carrying out follow-up reviews by the Auditor General is outlined below.

The Follow-up Process:

1. Following an audited organization's appearance before the committee, representatives of the Auditor General's office will contact representatives of the audited organization and request that a progress update be provided to the Office of the Auditor General within a period of time (usually 5 months).
2. Audited organizations must prepare a written response in the format noted below, and direct it to the Office of the Auditor General. In drafting the written response, organization representatives may wish to consult with the Office of the Comptroller General, and/or the Office of the Auditor General. As well, the Office of the Clerk of Committees would be pleased to answer any questions regarding the work of the committee, and committee procedure.
3. All written responses submitted by audited organizations are reviewed by the Office of the Auditor General to generally confirm the fairness of information about the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the Auditor General's report.
4. All written responses, and results of the Auditor General's review thereof, are provided to the Office of the Clerk of Committees for distribution to each committee member (normally six months after the witnesses' attendance before the committee). These materials are also provided to the audited organization and the Office of the Comptroller General.
5. Once the committee has tabled its report on the matter in the House, all written responses become public documents, and are not subject to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act procedures. Written responses, along with the Auditor General's review thereof, are also tabled in the Legislative Assembly on a bi-annual basis (March and October, although this is subject to variation). The Clerk of Committees should be advised well in advance of any material considered to be confidential.
6. Following review of the written response and the Auditor General's comments, the committee may request that representatives of the audited organization re-appear before the committee to provide

further information, or that further information be provided to the committee in written form.

7. The Office of the Comptroller General will arrange for witnesses to attend where the committee has asked for a return presentation based on the written follow-up.

Format of Written Responses:

Written follow-up information prepared by audited organizations in response to a request from the Office of the Auditor General should include the following items:

- Date of the written response.
- A brief introduction to and summary of the topic being considered, including a reference to the period during which the audit was conducted, date(s) the issue was considered by the committee, and how many of the recommendations have been fully implemented, partially implemented, or not implemented to date.
- A brief response to each recommendation made by the Auditor General (unless specifically advised to address only particular recommendations), including all actions taken to implement each recommendation.
- A workplan for implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations, including information on the means by which each recommendations will be implemented, time frames for implementation, identification of branches with primary responsibility for implementation, and procedures in place to monitor progress in implementing the recommendations.
- Any other information relevant to the Auditor General's or Public Accounts Committee's recommendations, including planned or current projects, studies, seminars, meetings, etc.
- Contact information for ministry/government organization representatives who have primary responsibility for responding to the Auditor General's recommendations (name, title, branch, phone and fax numbers, e-mail address).
- The reports are to be signed by a senior official responsible for the area, normally an Assistant Deputy Minister or Vice-president.

Reports should be relatively brief e.g. 5–10 pages but attachments are acceptable.

If guidance is needed in preparing the follow up report please contact any of the offices noted below.

Contact Information:

Office of the Clerk of Committees
Josie Schofield
Research Analyst
Phone: 250 356-1623
Fax: 250 356-8172

Office of the Auditor General
Doreen Sullivan
Executive Coordinator
Phone: 250 356-2627
Fax: 250 387-1230
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Office of the Comptroller General
Arn van Iersel
Comptroller General
Phone: 250 387-6692
Fax 250 356-2001
Arn.vanIersel@gems8.gov.bc.ca

Appendix B:

Office of the Auditor General: Follow-up Objectives and Methodology

Purpose of Following Up Audits

The Office conducts follow-up reviews in order to provide the Legislative Assembly and the public with information on the progress being made by government organizations in implementing the recommendations arising from the original work.

Performance audits are undertaken to assess how government organizations have given attention to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The concept of performance audits is based on two principles. The first is that public business should be conducted in a way that makes the best possible use of public funds. The second is that people who conduct public business should be held accountable for the prudent and effective management of the resources entrusted to them.

The Nature of Audit Follow-ups

A follow-up of an audit comprises:

1. requesting management to report the actions taken and to assess the extent to which recommendations identified in the original audit report have been implemented;
2. reviewing management's response to ascertain whether it presents fairly, in all significant respects, the progress being made in dealing with the recommendations;
3. determining if further action by management is required and, consequently, whether further follow-up work by the Office will be necessary in subsequent years; and
4. reporting to the Legislative Assembly and the public the responses of management and the results of our reviews of those responses.

The Nature of a Review

A review is distinguishable from an audit in that it provides a moderate rather than a high level of assurance. In our audits, we provide a high, though not absolute, level of assurance by designing procedures so that the risk of an inappropriate conclusion is reduced to a low level. These procedures include inspection, observation, enquiry, confirmation, analysis and discussion. Use of the term "high level of

assurance" refers to the highest reasonable level of assurance auditors provide on a subject. Absolute assurance is not attainable since an audit involves such factors as the use of judgement, the use of testing, the inherent limitations of control and the fact that much of the evidence available to us is persuasive rather than conclusive.

In a review, we provide a moderate level of assurance by limiting procedures to enquiry, document review and discussion, so that the risk of an inappropriate conclusion is reduced to a moderate level and the evidence obtained enables us to conclude the matter is plausible in the circumstances.

Scope of Audit Follow-ups

The follow-ups focus primarily on those recommendations that are agreed to by management at the time of the original audit or study. Where management does not accept our original recommendations, this is reported in managements' responses to the original audit reports. Since our reports are referred to the Legislative Assembly's Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts, management's concerns with our recommendations in some cases are discussed by the committee, which may also make recommendations for future action. If the committee endorses our recommendations, we include them in a follow-up. We also include any other recommendations made directly by the committee.

Frequency of Reporting on Audit Follow-ups

We follow the process agreed to between the Office of the Auditor General, the Office of the Controller General and the Public Accounts Committee (Appendix A).

Review Standards

We carry out our follow-up reviews in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements established by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Methods of Obtaining Evidence

Our reviews involve primarily enquiry, document review and discussion.

Enquiry consists of seeking appropriate information of knowledgeable persons within or outside the entity being audited. Types of enquiries include formal written enquiries addressed to third parties and informal oral enquiries addressed to persons within the entity. Consistent responses from different sources provide an increased degree of assurance, especially when the sources that provide the information are independent of each other.

Document review consists of examining documents such as minutes of senior management meetings, management plans, and manuals and policy statements to support assertions made in management's written report.

Discussion consists primarily of interviews with key management and staff, as necessary, for further verification and explanation.

Appendix C:

Office of the Auditor General: 2004/2005 Reports Issued to Date

Report 1

Follow-up of Performance Reports, April 2004

These reports and others are available on our website at http://www.bcauditor.com